

Arnold's
PRACTICAL SCHOOL
SABBATH LESSON
COMMENTARY
1911



PRESENTED BY

E. W. Sears

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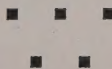


Arnold's Practical Sabbath School Commentary

ON THE
International Lessons
1911

A PRACTICAL AND COMPREHENSIVE COMMENTARY, WITH HINTS TO TEACHERS,
ILLUSTRATIONS, BLACKBOARD EXERCISES, QUESTIONS AND MAPS

EDITOR:
REV. DAVID S. WARNER, A. M.



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PREFACE

The Sunday-school of to-day is one of the greatest movements that have ever been inaugurated. It is advancing with remarkable rapidity and is reaching remote regions of the earth. The Sunday-school movement and the missionary movement are one in their ultimate aim, and are more and more coming to be one in their methods. Each movement stands for the spread of the knowledge of the gospel and the evangelization of the world. Each has received the same commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Each recognizes the fact that the world has a great need, and each comes to the world, whether at home or in the foreign field, with the remedy. The effort of the Sunday-school is to reach every man, woman and child in the world. This is an age of great undertakings and great achievements. The obstacles in the way of the advancement of Christ's kingdom are great, but that kingdom has in it an energy, before which obstacles must melt away.

No effort has been made in the preparation of this Commentary to hide the fact of sin or to apologize for it. The fact of sin is recognized and sin is condemned. The remedy for sin is proclaimed in the atonement made by Jesus Christ. Through him complete deliverance from sin is obtainable.

The Bible is as potent and valuable as ever. It has never become out-of-date, and has not outlived its usefulness, and it never will. The word of God has been attacked again and again, but it lives and glows with beauty and power, while its enemies, one after another, sink into oblivion.

There is rich encouragement in the preparation of the Sunday-school lesson. The world needs God's word. There is spiritual poverty in the absence of the riches of the Bible. Human reason can not point the way to heaven. God has seen fit in his infinite wisdom to make a revelation of himself to man in his word, and that word is exactly suited to man's need. There is satisfaction to the Christian in being, in some degree, instrumental in placing before a needy world the great truths of the Bible. The systematic study of the word of God in the Sunday-school is a powerful agency in bringing the truths of the Bible to the twenty-eight millions of persons enrolled in the Sunday-schools of the world to-day. The Bible teaches the necessity of conversion, and the Sunday-school that fulfils its mission is laboring for the conversion of souls.

The commentary matter on the various lessons, the Teaching Plan, the Hints to Primary Teachers and the unsigned articles have been prepared by the editor. The Practical Survey has been written by Mrs. Tressa R. Arnold and the Practical Applications are from the writings of Mrs. Abbie C. Morrow. Rev. Edwin C. Best has again prepared the Blackboard Exercise.

It is the hope of those who have written this book that it will go forth to be a blessing to the world in holding up the standard of a pure and spiritual religion, and that it will lead to a deeper reverence and love for God's word.

Chicago, Illinois.

DAVID S. WARNER.

THE LESSONS

THE DIVIDED KINGDOM, CAPTIVITY AND RETURN

HISTORY OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

FIRST QUARTER

I.	January	1.—The Kingdom Divided.	1 Kings 12: 1-24.	Print 12: 6-16
II.	"	8.—Jeroboam Makes Idols for Israel to Worship.	1 Kings 12: 25-13: 6.	Print 12: 25-33
III.	"	15.—Asa's Good Reign in Judah.	2 Chron. 15: 1-15	
IV.	"	22.—Omri and Ahab Lead Israel into Greater Sin.	1 Kings 16: 15-33.	Print 16: 23-33
V.	"	29.—Jehoshaphat's Good Reign in Judah.	2 Chron. 17: 1-13.	Print 17: 1-6, 9-13
VI.	February	5.—Elijah the Prophet Appears in Israel.	1 Kings 17: 1-24.	Print 17: 1-16
VII.	"	12.—Elijah's Victory over the Prophets of Baal.	1 Kings 18: 1, 2, 17-40.	Print 18: 25-39
VIII.	"	19.—Elijah's Flight and Return.	1 Kings 18: 41-19: 21.	Print 19: 1-16
IX.	"	26.—Elijah Meets Ahab in Naboth's Vineyard.	1 Kings 21: 1-29.	Print 21: 11-20
X.	March	5.—Elijah Goes up by a Whirlwind into Heaven.	2 Kings 2: 1-18	Print 2: 1-11
XI.	"	12.—Elisha the Prophet Restores a Child to Life.	2 Kings 4: 8-37.	Print 4: 25-37
XII.	"	19.—Defeat through Drunkenness—Temperance Lesson.	1 Kings 20: 12-21	
XIII.	"	26.—Review.		

SECOND QUARTER

I.	April	2.—Elisha Heals Naaman the Syrian.	2 Kings 5: 1-27.	Print 5: 1-14
II.	"	9.—Elisha's Heavenly Defenders.	2 Kings 6: 8-23.	Print 6: 8-17
III.	"	16.—The Resurrection Morn—Easter Lesson.		John 20: 1-18
IV.	"	23.—Joash Repairs the Temple.	2 Kings 11: 21-12: 16.	Print 12: 4-15
V.	"	30.—God's Pity for the Heathen—Foreign Missionary Lesson.	Jonah 3: 1-4: 11.	Print 3: 5-4: 11
VI.	May	7.—Uzziah, King of Judah, Humbled.	2 Chron. 26: 1-23.	Print 26: 8-21
VII.	"	14.—Isaiah's Vision and Call to Service—Home Missionary Lesson.	Isa. 6: 1-13	
VIII.	"	21.—Song of the Vineyard—Temperance Lesson.	Isa. 5: 1-12	
IX.	"	28.—Micah's Picture of Universal Peace—International Peace Lesson.	Mic. 4: 1-8	
X.	June	4.—Israel's Penitence and God's Pardon.	Hos. 14: 1-9	
XI.	"	11.—Hezekiah's Great Passover.	2 Chron. 30: 1-27.	Print 30: 13-27
XII.	"	18.—The Downfall of Samaria.	2 Kings 17: 1-18.	Print 17: 1-14
XIII.	"	25.—Review.		

HISTORY OF JUDAH THROUGH THE EXILE AND RESTORATION

THIRD QUARTER

I.	July	2.—Isaiah's Prophecy Concerning Sennacherib.	Isa. 37: 14-38.	Print 37: 21-36
II.	"	9.—The Suffering Servant of Jehovah.	Isa. 52: 13-53: 12	
III.	"	16.—Manasseh's Wickedness and Penitence.	2 Chron. 33: 1-20.	Print 33: 1-13
IV.	"	23.—Josiah's Devotion to God.	2 Chron. 34: 1-13	
V.	"	30.—The Finding of the Book of the Law.	2 Chron. 34: 14-33.	Print 34: 14-21, 29-33
VI.	August	6.—Jeremiah Tried and Acquitted.	Jer. 26: 1-24.	Print 26: 7-19
VII.	"	13.—Jehoiakim Burns the Prophet's Book.	Jer. 36: 1-32.	Print 36: 20-32
VIII.	"	20.—Jeremiah Cast into Prison.	Jer. 37: 1-21.	Print 37: 4-21
IX.	"	27.—Judah Carried Captive to Babylon.	Jer. 39: 1-18.	Print 39: 1-10
X.	September	3.—Review.		
XI.	"	10.—Daniel and His Companions—Temperance Lesson.		Dan. 1: 8-20
XII.	"	17.—Daniel's Companions in the Fiery Furnace.	Dan. 3: 1-30.	Print 3: 13-28
XIII.	"	24.—Daniel in the Lions' Den.	Dan. 6: 1-28.	Print 6: 10-23

FOURTH QUARTER

I.	October	1.—The Prophet Ezekiel a Watchman.	Ezek. 3: 1-27.	Print 3: 12-21
II.	"	8.—The Life-giving Stream.	Ezek. 47: 1-12	
III.	"	15.—The Return from the Captivity.	Ezra 1: 1-11; 2: 64-70.	Print 1: 1-11
IV.	"	22.—The Foundation of the Second Temple Laid.	Ezra 3: 1-4: 5.	Print 3: 8-4: 5
V.	"	29.—A Psalm of Deliverance.	Psa. 85: 1-13	
VI.	November	5.—Esther Pleading for Her People.	Esth. 4: 1-5: 3.	Print 4: 10-5: 3
VII.	"	12.—Belshazzar's Feast and Fate—World's Temperance Lesson.		
VIII.	"	19.—Ezra's Journey to Jerusalem.	Dan. 5: 1-31.	Print 5: 17-30
IX.	"	26.—Nehemiah's Prayer.	Ezra 8: 15-36.	Print 8: 21-32
X.	December	3.—Nehemiah Rebuilds the Wall of Jerusalem.	Neh. 1: 1-11	
XI.	"	10.—Nehemiah and His Enemies.	Neh. 4: 1-23.	Print 4: 6-18
XII.	"	17.—Ezra Teaches the Law.	Neh. 6: 1-19.	Print 6: 1-12
XIII.	"	24.—Jesus Born in Bethlehem—Christmas Lesson.	Neh. 8: 1-18.	Print 8: 1-12
XIV.	"	31.—Review.	Matt. 2: 1-12	

EDITORIAL

Home Readings

The Daily Home Bible Readings for 1911 are, in the main, those prepared by the Sunday-school Editorial Association and approved by the International Sunday-school Lesson Committee.

The Bible in the Sunday-school

As Sunday-school workers we should never for a moment lose sight of the fact that it is the Bible we are studying, and not simply the lesson help. We should not be satisfied unless teacher and scholar make it a practise to have the Bible in the Sunday-school. While the lesson help is of great value in throwing light upon the word, and comes with direction as to how the truths may be presented and applied, it is designed rather for the home than for class use. To be sure it is easier to carry a quarterly than a Bible, but the Bible is the text-book in the Sunday-school and should be accorded an honorable place there. The lesson help is not likely to command the respect that is given to the Bible. Let us have the Bible in the hands of every member of the Sunday-school who is able to read.

Aside from the considerations mentioned already, it is a sufficient reason why we should have the Bible in the Sunday-school class that the lessons assigned are often too long to be printed in their entirety in the lesson helps. This is notably true with respect to the lessons of this year. Very few of them are short enough to admit of their being printed in full. Selections have been made by the lesson committee of sufficient length to include the connected facts and events, that the lesson may not seem to be merely a detached portion of scripture. With the Bible in the hand of teacher and scholar the entire lesson can receive requisite attention.

The Bible Exalted

The world is far from being ready to dispense with the Bible. Occasionally a person of some prominence arises to ridicule God's word and to put it aside, and to replace it by human reason, but the Bible is

still a fixture in the world. It has its place in the church. The very existence of the church is evidence of the authority of the Bible.

It is in the legal enactments of the nations of Christendom. The laws of our commonwealths are based upon the principles laid down in the word of God. The Bible with its tenets could not be taken out of the statute laws without breaking up the entire fabric of the legal system of the state. Moses is still the greatest law-giver of the ages.

The Bible has a permanent place in history. Its facts are interwoven with the narrative of human progress. Nations have prospered as they have adhered to the principle laid down in the scriptures, and they have gone down as they have violated divine law. History has in large measure been the fulfilment of the prophecies contained in scripture.

The Bible is in the literature of Christian nations. Many of the most esteemed passages in literature owe their excellence to references to the Bible, or to quotations from that book. If all scripture references and quotations were taken out of literature there would be little left. No one can be properly said to possess a liberal education who does not have a good general knowledge of the Bible.

The Bible holds its exalted place from generation to generation because of its intrinsic worth. Some books are received with favor for a time, run their course and are forgotten. A few books possess merit enough to be called classics, and may be read with profit more than once. The Bible, however, is for all times, all classes and all peoples. It can be read with profit, not once or twice, but day after day and year after year. It never loses its charm nor its grip, no matter how often it is read or how constantly it is studied. It has its intrinsic value because it is God's word, and it is God's word to man. Its source is exalted. Men wrote it, but they wrote "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Devout scholars of all ages have given years of study to its hallowed pages, and as they have studied have been more and more per-

suaded of its infinite excellence. It is destined to remain the book of books until the end of time.

The Gospel for All Lands

At the World's Sunday-school Convention held in Washington, D. C., last year, a remarkable statement was made by Professor J. R. Chitambar, of India, which bespeaks the power and adaptability of the gospel. He spoke of the great problems in India awaiting solution. Reference was made to the caste system and the treatment of child widows especially. He said, "Secular education will not solve the problems of India. We have literature, art, classical learning, philosophy, mathematics, the sciences and history, but the gospel alone will solve our problems, and it is now solving them." An orthodox Brahman brought his son to be admitted to a Christian boarding-school. An attempt was made to dissuade him from doing it, holding out to him the powerful plea that if he should place his son there the boy would at once lose caste. Said the father, "I should prefer to have my son lose caste and retain his character, rather than to have him retain caste and lose his character." The world has never before known such missionary activity as exists to-day. No heathen land is too remote, no heathen people is too hostile, no unevangelized tribe is too degraded, no non-Christian nation is too refined or too firmly wedded to a false religion to be overlooked or shunned by the Christian missionary. Is there a mission field where there is danger of fierce opposition? There is a consecrated servant of Christ who is ready to carry the gospel message thither. Is there a land where there is a probability that disease will affect the foreigner? There is some one whose love for souls is so intense that he will run the risk, trusting in God, and will tell the people of Jesus, the Savior. Sunday-school workers are wielding a mighty influence for the evangelization of the world as they make missions a prominent theme in the school. Nowhere else can such effective work be done for the spread of the gospel during succeeding years.

Decadent Israel

The history of the Israelitish race upon which we dwell in our Sunday-school lessons the present year, is full of interest to us as mere history. There are many crises, through which the divided kingdoms passed, that show the character and tendencies of the peoples composing the two kingdoms. Men of striking personality appear from time to time to turn the tide of disaster or to assist in plunging the nations into greater ruin. The year's lessons commence with the kingdom of Israel undivided and remarkably prosperous, and they end with one nation lost sight of altogether, and the other a subject nation, reduced through decades of captivity to their conquerors. The nations went down, not primarily because their enemies were more powerful than they, but because of inherent weakness due to their persistent disregard to the laws which God had given them. They would not obey the voice of the Lord. Their way was clearly marked out for them, and their prosperity was assured upon the condition that they would obey God. It was made clear to them that their place of power and dominion was not dependent upon the strength or equipment of outside nations. They had the assurance that God would fight for them, if their enemies should attempt to conquer them. Even the simple condition essential to their prosperity was disregarded, and the nations that were eager for conquest were allowed to attack them, and they were powerless to resist. As if Jehovah would make his people realize the intensity of his interest in their welfare he sent one prophet after another to them, giving warning, instruction and encouragement, calculated to bring them to a right understanding of their relation to God, and their responsibility for their own welfare. Warning, tender rebuke and judgment were alike unavailing, and the nations to whom much was promised and of whom much might reasonably be expected went down in decay, the one to be lost to history, the other into deep humiliation. The lessons of these decadent nations recur over and over again.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE DIVIDED KINGDOMS OF JUDAH AND ISRAEL

DATE B. C.	KINGS OF JUDAH	KINGS OF ISRAEL	PROPHETS
975	Rehoboam reigned 17 years.....	Jeroboam reigned 22 years.....	Ahijah
958	Abijah, or Abijam, 3 years.....		Shemaiah
955	Asa, 41 years.....		Azariah
954		Nadab, 2 years.....	
953		Baasha, 24 years.....	Hanani
930		Elah, 2 years.....	Jehu
929		Zimri, 7 days.....	
929		Omri, 12 years.....	
918		Ahab, 22 years.....	Elijah
914	Jehoshaphat, 25 years.....		Micaiah
897		Ahaziah, 2 years.....	Elisha
896		Jehoram, or Joram, 12 years.....	Jahaziel
892	Jehoram, or Joram, 8 years. Reigned 4 years conjointly with his father...		
885	Ahaziah, 1 year.....		
884	Athaliah, usurper for 7 years.....	Jehu, 28 years.....	Jehoiada
878	Jehoash, or Joash, 40 years.....		
856		Jehoahaz, 17 years.....	Jonah
839		Jehoash, 16 years.....	
839	Amaziah, 29 years.....		
825		Jeroboam II, 41 years.....	Hosea
810	Uzziah, or Azariah, 52 years.....		Joel
784		Interregnum, 11 years.....	Amos
772		Zachariah, 6 months.....	
771		Shallum, 1 month.....	
771		Menahem, 10 years.....	
760		Pekahiah, 2 years.....	
758		Pekah, 20 years.....	
757	Jotham, 16 years.....		
741	Ahaz, 16 years.....		Obed
738		Interregnum, 8 years.....	
730		Hoshea, 9 years.....	Isaiah
726	Hezekiah, 29 years.....		Micah
721		Captivity of Israel.....	Nahum
697	Manasseh, 55 years.....		Habakkuk
642	Amon, 2 years.....		
640	Josiah, 31 years.....		Jeremiah
609	Jehoahaz, 3 months.....		Zephaniah
609	Jehoiakim, 11 years.....		
606	Nebuchadnezzar makes Judah tributary and carries away a few captives		
598	Jehoiachin, Jeconiah, or Coniah, 3 months.....		Daniel
598	Zedekiah, 11 years.....		
586	Complete captivity of Judah.....		
536	Return of Jewish captives.....		
516	The restored temple completed.....		

LESSON I

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Dec. 26.—Kingdom divided.—1 Kings 12: 1-24. Tu.—Manner of the king predicted.—1 Sam. 8: 10-22. Wed.—Manner of the king verified.—1 Kings 10: 1-23. Th.—Prophecy of Ahijah.—1 Kings 11: 26-40. Fr.—Evil counsel.—Prov. 4: 1-19. Sat.—Hearing reproof.—Prov. 15: 20-33. Su.—Counsel of the wicked.—Psa. 1: 1-16.

THE KINGDOM DIVIDED.—1 Kings 12: 1-24.**Print 12: 6-16.****AUTHORIZED VERSION***(Memory Verses 13, 14)*

SUPT.—6 And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men, that stood before Sol'o-mon his father while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people?

School.—7 And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever.

8 But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, and which stood before him:

9 And he said unto them, What counsel give ye that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us lighter?

10 And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins.

11 And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

12 So Jer-o-bo'am and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day.

13 And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men's counsel that they gave him;

14 And spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

15 Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the Lord, that he might perform his saying, which the Lord spake by A-hi'jah the Shi'lo-nite unto Jer-o-bo'am the son of Ne'bat.

16 So when all Is'ra-el saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in Da'vid? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jes'se: to your tents, O Is'ra-el: now see to thine own house, Da'vid. So Is'ra-el departed unto their tents.

***AMERICAN REVISION**

6 And king Rehoboam took counsel with the old men, that had stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, saying, What counsel give ye me to return answer to this people? 7 And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever. 8 But he forsook the counsel of the old men which they had given him, and took counsel with the young men that were grown up with him, that stood before him. 9 And he said unto them, What counsel give ye, that we may return answer to this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke that thy father did put upon us lighter? 10 And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou say unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou speak unto them. My little finger is thicker than my father's loins. 11 And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

12 So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king bade, saying, Come to me again the third day. 13 And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the counsel of the old men which they had given him, 14 and spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. 15 So the king hearkened not unto the people; for it was a thing brought about of Jehovah, that he might establish his word, which Jehovah spake by Ahijah the Shiloneite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

16 And when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? **School.**—He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed. Prov. 13: 20.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—It is dangerous to follow unwise counsel.

TOPIC.—A national crisis.

OUTLINE.—I. Rehoboam's opportunity. II. Seeking advice. III. Following unwise counsel. IV. A great revolt.

TIME.—B. C. 975, according to the common chronology.

PLACE.—Shechem, about thirty-five miles north of Jerusalem.

PARALLEL ACCOUNT.—2 Chron. 10: 1-19; 11: 1-4. **READ.**—1 Kings 11: 26-40.

INTRODUCTION.—Two and one-half years ago we studied the history of the kingdom of Israel to the close of Solomon's reign, and now the study of the history of that nation is resumed. We are quickly introduced to a divided nation, the division having taken place apparently with great suddenness. David, by his superior ability as a leader, and by his strong personality, had succeeded in uniting in one kingdom all the tribes of

Israel, and had delivered that kingdom intact to his son Solomon, who kept the tribes united during his prosperous and brilliant reign. Apparently the old line of cleavage had been obliterated, but when a new occasion arose, which tested the solidity of the kingdom, elements of discord manifested themselves. David had ruled seven and one-half years over Judah and Benjamin before he had been accepted as king by the other tribes, but when Rehoboam took a position in defiance of the feelings and interests of the supporters of his father and grandfather, the old line of cleavage showed itself, and a breach followed. Henceforth the one nation became two, in some respects similar, and in others, very unlike.

COMMENTARY.—I. REHOBAM'S OPPORTUNITY (vs. 1-5). At the death of Solomon, Rehoboam, his son, and his only son, so far as we are informed by the sacred records, ascended the throne to administer the affairs of a large and prosperous kingdom. During his father's reign some of the tribes had become disaffected because of Solomon's large exactions of tribute and service, and hoped for relief from the change of rulers. Shechem was the place

to which Rehoboam proceeded, that he might receive the kingdom with the approval of the northern tribes, which he knew were likely to hold themselves aloof from him. He doubtless chose Shechem because it was central for those tribes and was a place both sacred and historic. The patriarchs had made the place historic, and it lay between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim, made sacred by the proclamation of curses and blessings upon Israel from the two mountains respectively (Deut. 28: 11-13; Josh. 8: 33-35). Rehoboam had only to assure all Israel that he would relieve them of all unjust burdens and adopt a policy of righteousness and mercy in government, and he would have enjoyed prosperity in the kingdom. When he required three days to answer their request for justice in government they had reason to fear that their interests would be disregarded. Their demands were both reasonable and just.

II. SEEKING ADVICE (VS. 6-11). **6. consulted**—Rehoboam did not care to assume the responsibility of answering the people in a matter so important as this without seeking counsel of others. **old men**—Those who were old in years and experience. **stood before Solomon**—Custom demanded that the officers of the king should stand while in his presence. In asking advice of men of wisdom, men who had been the advisers of his father, Rehoboam took a wise course. **7. if thou wilt be a servant**—The duty of a king is to have regard for the desires and needs of his subjects. He should serve them by doing for them what will make them better and happier. The imperious Rehoboam could scarcely bear the thought of sacrificing his own selfish purposes for the welfare of his people. **good words**—Kind words that would indicate the king's affection for his subjects and his interest in their well-being. **thy servants for ever**—A little effort on the king's part, with what to him might seem like humiliation, would have conciliated the opposing factions, and secured to him a kingdom at once united and stable.

8. forsook the counsel of the old men—Their advice was far from pleasing to his imperious disposition. He could not endure to appear as yielding to his subjects. **young men**—Probably sons of Solomon's chief officers, who had been trained in the royal court, and were designed to be the officers of the succeeding king.—**Whedon**. They were without that experience and wisdom which come with age. They thought only of power, and the wealth and authority which they believed to be inherent in royalty. **9. what counsel give ye**—As if he expected an answer different from that given by the older men. The young men could clearly see that Rehoboam was not pleased with the advice already given him, and his manner invited an answer in keeping with his haughty disposition. **make the yoke... lighter**—If Solomon had retained, in his later life, the humility and devotion to God that characterized his earlier years as king, there would have been no occasion for the people to make this request. His pride and ambition led him to impose grievous burdens on his people. **10. the young men... spake**—They had no hesitancy in giving counsel. **my little finger is thicker than my father's loins (R. V.)**—The young men would have Rehoboam announce to his people that, instead of making their burdens lighter, his exactions upon them would be as much greater than those of Solomon as the body is greater than the little finger. These young advisers flattered the young king and confirmed him in his vanity. They would have him teach his subjects that no rights would come to them by their asking, and their duty was to submit in silence to any exactions which their sovereign might wish to place upon them. **11. a heavy yoke**—

A yoke implies submission and service. The people did not object to either, but there was a limit to the burdens they could carry. **whips... scorpions**—The yoke and whips belong together, and are the signs of laboring servants. The king was to use, instead of the whips for servants, the thorn-whip used for criminals alone, and which was called "scorpion" by the Romans.—**Lange**.

III. FOLLOWING UNWISE COUNSEL (VS. 12-15). **12. Jeroboam**—He was a servant of Solomon. He was the son of Nebat, of the tribe of Ephraim, and a man of great ability (1 Kings 11: 26-28). His life was threatened by Solomon, who feared that he would gain possession of the kingdom, and he fled to Egypt (1 Kings 11: 40). After the death of Solomon, Jeroboam returned to Israel and was present at Shechem as the natural leader of the ten northern tribes. **the third day**—Rehoboam had asked for a delay of three days to prepare an answer to the people's request. **13. answered the people roughly**—Added to the harsh words of his answer was the unkind manner which he employed. Rehoboam displayed neither piety, wisdom nor good taste. **14. spake... counsel of the young men**—He heeded not the wise words of men of age and experience, nor did he ask counsel of God. His mind was filled with the thought of his own importance, and visions of kingly prerogatives floated before his disordered fancy.

15. hearkened not—Did not heed the reasonable and just request of the people. He failed to appreciate his opportunity. A large and wealthy domain was his by inheritance, a well-disposed people waited to receive him as their sovereign, a prosperous future was before him, and honors without limit awaited him, if he would but rise to the opportunity and show himself a man of wisdom and heart. If he had treated the people as men, and had shown kindness to them, his reign would have been as prosperous as those of his father and grandfather. He "hearkened not," has told the tale of myriads of failures since the time of Rehoboam. **the cause was from the Lord**—The failure of Solomon to obey the Lord fully had prepared the way for the punishment of the nation, and God permitted the evil dispositions of men to accomplish his designs. **his saying**—The prophecy is given in 1 Kings 11: 29-39.

IV. A GREAT REVOLT (VS. 16-24). **16. Israel saw**—They had anxiously awaited the king's answer. When it came they clearly saw that their lot would be still more unhappy than under the reign of Solomon. They could hope for no relief and were ready with their answer. Rehoboam's course was marked by selfishness, greed and folly. Thirsting for imperial power he lost at least two-thirds of what he might have had. Following his own impulses and unwise counsel brought disaster. **what portion... in David**—Since no help came from the king, they felt under no obligation to him. David is mentioned as indicating the royal family. This was a signal for revolt. See 2 Sam. 20: 1. **to your tents**—The people were called upon to prepare for war. **17-24**. The rebellion was complete. All that remained to Rehoboam were the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and the people of the other tribes dwelling in the cities of Judah.

QUESTIONS.—About what year did the events of our lesson occur? Who was Rehoboam? What request did the people make of Rehoboam? What burdens had Solomon laid upon the people? To whom did Rehoboam go for counsel? State the two kinds of counsel he received. Tell which was better, giving reasons. What wrongs did Rehoboam commit? How did the people receive his answer? What tribes remained faithful to Rehoboam?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. The past two years have been spent in New Testament study; this year is to be given to the study of the Old Testament. 2. Locate the place of this lesson in scripture history by giving a general outline. 3. Brief consideration of the life, character and reign of Solomon.

II. THEME.—The folly of worldly ambition.

III. A GREAT OPPORTUNITY.—1. The ancestry of Rehoboam. 2. The extent of the kingdom which descended to him. 3. The possibilities before him. (1) Wealth. (2) Honor. (3) Being a benefactor of mankind. (4) An acceptable servant of the living God.

IV. ADVICE SOUGHT AND SECURED.—1. The wisdom of consulting with the old men. 2. The nature of their counsel. 3. Why rejected. 4. The counsel of the young men. 5. In what respects was their counsel faulty?

V. REHOBAM'S AMBITION.—1. Love of power. 2. His wrong idea of kingship. 3. Unwilling to be a servant of the people. 4. In his eagerness to be great he missed the road to greatness. 5. Pride was the basis of Rehoboam's unwise and wicked decision.

VI. DISASTER—1. The attitude of the tribes toward Rehoboam and his policy. 2. Previous estrangement. 3. A study of Jeroboam, the leader of the revolt. (1) His ancestry. (2) His social position. (3) His ability. 4. The breach now made was never healed. 5. Consider how easily the disaster might have been averted.

VII. IMPORTANT TRUTHS.—1. Pride and self-will are destructive. 2. Man's highest work is to serve others. 3. Selfishness is short-sighted. 4. The highest good to one's self comes through seeking the welfare of others. 5. Many learn too late the folly of worldly ambition. 6. Rehoboam sought for absolute power over twelve tribes and lost five-sixths of all he sought. 7. Errors may be made in a brief space of time in the pursuit of selfish ends that will cause a life-time of regret and loss. 8. Show mercy and receive favor.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—A national crisis.

- I. When Rehoboam refused Israel's request.
- II. When Israel revolted against Rehoboam.

I. When Rehoboam refused Israel's request. We trace in this history a reflection of every revolution in its nature and course. The same sins and weaknesses appear which lie at the bottom of all such events. Though Rehoboam was acknowledged as the rightful successor to his father, there was a desire among the people to modify the character of the government. As men of Israel they were determined to bring their grievances under the notice of the new sovereign, before they ratified his succession. Instead of acclamations he was received with stipulations. There was no demand for the maintenance of the law and the covenant, but merely material elevation, less labor and more outward freedom and independence. They were anxious about the decrees of taxation but not about the removal of idolatry. Their conduct revealed a state of things which always and everywhere precedes revolutions. Rehoboam's answer was as a spark falling into a powder magazine. In taking three days to prepare his answer "the tyrant betrayed the fool." He left God out of his counsels. Of what importance were the counsels of Jehovah to Rehoboam the son of Naamah, the Ammon-

iteess whose national God was Molech? Where king and people fear God there will be no rebellion, but where no covenant with God exists all human considerations fall in pieces. The grievances of the people and the decision of the king brought about the rebellion.

II. When Israel revolted against Rehoboam. The rending of the kingdom was not a sudden event that came without warning. The calamity can be traced to the time when Solomon's heart first began to turn from the Lord. That corrupting power though hidden for a while appeared later in a more pronounced form. The nation retained its visible unity under Solomon, but when the charm of his personal reign was over, the disintegrating work that had been going on beneath the surface was made manifest. Rehoboam, "the enlarger of the kingdom," became the chief instrument in its disruption. By his folly the strong nation was changed into two comparatively weak and distracted kingdoms, which ever after maintained toward each other an attitude of jealousy and strife. Sin in high and low places caused the rebellion, a calamity, from the ill effects of which the land never recovered. Among the people was ingratitude, jealousy, envy, hatred and a thirst for independence. With the king, tyranny, violence and folly held sway. Both politically and religiously the unity of the chosen people was hopelessly broken, and the career of each separate division became henceforth one of ever deepening corruption. The division of the kingdom was a consequence of manifold sins in the lives of Solomon, Rehoboam and Jeroboam, and yet we may look upon it as a divine dispensation for their humiliation and chastisement. There was guilt in both kingdoms and guilt was the germ of their destruction. It might be said therefore that the division came through both kingdoms. It was a political crisis and a fatal policy. The result was two kingdoms and two kings, weakness in the place of strength, jealousy instead of trust, rival places and systems of worship and the downfall of both kingdoms. Judah became weak, being deserted by the ten tribes, and Israel became weak by deserting the house of the Lord. The kingdom of Israel was long in coming to the glory of its perfection, but not so long in its decline after the division. When as a united kingdom there began a falling away from the Lord, there is little wonder that there should be a falling away from each other, Israel from Judah. Thus to rebel against the seed of David, whom God had advanced to the kingdom, and to set up another kingdom in opposition to that family, was a great sin (2 Chron. 13: 5-8). Henceforth Israel should learn by their own folly how bitter it was to forsake the living God and thereby lose his favor and support. They were also to receive message after message from God through the prophets, warning them of the danger of their wicked course and entreating them to return unto the Lord.

T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

<p>A HOUSE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF CANNOT STAND. CHURCH DISSENSIONS LEAD TO RUIN.</p> <p>THIS EVENT MARKS THE BEGINNING OF THEIR DOWNFALL.</p>	<p>A DIVIDED KINGDOM</p> 	<p>REHOBAM TOOK UNWISE COUNSEL, WHICH INJURED MANY.</p> <p>CHILDREN SHOULD LISTEN TO PARENTS, PASTORS, TEACHERS.</p> <p>"A SOFT ANSWER."</p>
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Practical Applications

"The king answered the people roughly" (v. 13). Rehoboam's name means, "Room for the people." In his defiant answer, he sadly contradicted his name. The true leader is the servant of the people. "I am among you as he that serveth" (Luke 22:27), said the great King. The true earthly monarch will follow the same path and "by love serve" his people (Gal. 5:13). The true pastor will not tyrannize "over God's heritage," but be an example "to the flock" of gentleness and godliness (1 Pet. 5:3).

"And spake to them after the counsel of the young men" (v. 14). He followed the advice of the young and ignorant rather than the aged and wise. "Old men for counsel, young men for war," the proverb reads. D. W. Whittle says, "To disregard lightly the advice of a wise old man shows one to be shallow, self-opinionated and unfit for success."

"My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke" (v. 14). Solomon wrote, "The way of the fool is right in his own eyes; but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise" (Prov. 12:15). But he did not practise his own proverb and Rehoboam followed his father's foolish doing, not his wise saying. What we do has a greater influence than what we say. Solomon's sin of idolatry was closely connected with the extravagance which caused the division of the kingdom. The splendor of his domestic life (1 Kings 4:22-26) and the magnificence of his kingly court (1 Kings 10:21-26; 11:3) were a severe strain even for his prosperous people. Building the temple (1 Kings 6:21, 22), which a statistician estimated cost the enormous sum of \$52,117,034,867.46; fortifying Jerusalem (1 Kings 11:27); erecting palaces (1 Kings 7:1-8); building cities (1 Kings 9:17-19); and the high places for his strange wives (1 Kings 11:7, 8), led to forced labor (1 Kings 5:13) and heavy taxes. Israel grew discontented and demanded from Solomon's successor security against the continuance of such abuses (1 Kings 12:1-4). Rehoboam's insolence made way for the people's ingratitude. They cried in the very words of Sheba's revolt against David, "To your tents, O Israel" (v. 16; 2 Sam. 20:1). "So Israel departed unto their tents" (v. 16). They rejected their king and defied him. An abbot wanted a piece of ground. The owner consented to lease it for one crop only. The abbot sowed acorns, which took three hundred years to ripen. J. R. Miller says, "Satan begs for one crop only, and then sows seeds whose harvest will fill all the life to the end. We do not know what we are doing when we start a wrong thing." Rehoboam sowed a dozen rash words, and the crop was four hundred years of strife and folly. The great empire of Solomon was shattered and his kingdom divided, never to be one again until Christ comes (Ezek. 37:15-28).

"Jeroboam was.... king" (v. 20). "The cause was from the Lord, that he might perform his saying, which the Lord spake by Ahijah.... unto Jero-boam" (v. 15). God promised Jero-boam that he should rule over "ten tribes" (1 Kings 11:35). Like many another he sought to obtain himself what God had promised to give him, and failed utterly (1 Kings 11:40). Were there dark days and doubts of God's word and rebellious murmurings? How worse than wasted all the time given to these. In due time he came to the kingdom. God has promised the overcomers a throne (Rev. 3:21). Our coronation day will surely come. Meanwhile let us "hearken," that we may receive the rewards of obedience.

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—The proud and haughty are sure to be humbled.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

Rehoboam { Refused wise } Counsel
 { Followed unwise }
 A kingdom lost through pride and
 self-will

The starting point. The change from the study of the life of Christ to that of the history of the Israelitish nation is a marked one and calls for careful thought to begin right. The child needs to be taught not only the existence of the kingdom of Israel, but also how it came to exist. It is not necessary to go back to the creation for a beginning, but the story of the call of Abraham can be briefly told, including the oft-repeated promise which God made to him, and its fulfilment. Tell the story of Saul's being made king of Israel and of his successors, David and Solomon. This will bring the history down to the time of Rehoboam. If you have a blackboard for your class you might place upon it, "Abraham, the father of the nation of Israel," and below it, "Saul, the first king of Israel," then, "David, the second king of Israel," and, "Solomon, the third king of Israel." This will prepare the way for the study of the lesson of the day, and will be an outline for frequent reviews.

Wise counsel refused. Tell the story of a child that wanted very much to do something that was not exactly right and asked some of the older friends about it, and their advice was not to do it at all. Bring out the opportunity that Rehoboam had of being a kind and great king. Show how willing the people were to receive him and stand by him if he would deal justly and kindly by them. It will be necessary to explain to the children that kings at that time had great authority and power. They could take the property of their subjects, could make them work for them, and even had the right to take their lives. In refusing to follow the counsel of the old men Rehoboam wished to have it known that he was king and could do as he pleased. He would show the people that he, and not they, would say what was to be done.

Unwise counsel followed. Bring out the reasons why Rehoboam refused to do as the old men advised, and sought and followed the advice of the young men. It is natural for us to seek for advice that is in keeping with our desires. Ask a series of questions to call forth the thought that children too often are ready to follow the advice of those who would influence them to do wrong.

The loss of a kingdom. In striving unjustly for more power Rehoboam lost a large part of what he had. Tell the story of the dog that had a nice bone in his mouth. He saw his image reflected in the water and thought it was another dog with a bone. He wanted the bone that the other dog had and snapped for it, and lost his own and went hungry. Children, as well as older people, often allow their pride and self-will to rob them of that which is rightfully theirs. Teach the class that much blessing comes to those who are helpful to others. One way to secure happiness is to try to make others happy.

LESSON II

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Jan. 2.—Jeroboam makes idols for Israel.—1 Kings 12: 25-13: 6. Tu.—Golden calf.—Exod. 32: 1-35. Wed.—Offense of Israel.—Psa. 106: 1-46. Th.—Prophecy against Jeroboam's altar.—1 Kings 13: 1-10. Fr.—Prophecy fulfilled.—2 Kings 23: 15-20. Sat.—Joined to idols.—Hos. 4: 1-19. Su.—Wages of sin.—Rom. 6: 1-23.

JEROBOAM MAKES IDOLS FOR ISRAEL TO WORSHIP.—1 Kings 12: 25-13: 6.
Print 12: 25-33.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 28-30)

SUPT.—25 Then Jer-o-bo'am built She'chem in mount E'phra-im, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Pen'u-el.

School.—26 And Jer-o-bo'am said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of Da'vid:

27 If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Je-ru'sa-lem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Re-ho-bo'am king of Ju'dah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Re-ho-bo'am king of Ju'dah.

28 Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Je-ru'sa-lem: behold thy gods, O Is'ra-el, which brought thee up out of the land of E'gypt.

29 And he set the one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Dan.

30 And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan.

31 And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Le'vi.

32 And Jer-o-bo'am ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Ju'dah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Beth-el, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Beth-el the priests of the high places which he had made.

33 So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Beth-el the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Is'ra-el: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.

*AMERICAN REVISION

25 Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill-country of Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and he went out from thence, and built Penuel. 26 And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now will the kingdom return to the house of David: 27 if this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem, then will the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me, and return to Rehoboam king of Judah. 28 Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold; and he said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. 29 And he set the one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Dan. 30 And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. 31 And he made houses of high places, and made priests from among all the people, that were not of the sons of Levi. 32 And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he went up unto the altar; so did he in Beth-el, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Beth-el the priests of the high places that he had made. 33 And he went up unto the altar which he had made in Beth-el on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart: and he ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and went up unto the altar, to burn incense.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. Exod. 20: 4.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—Making religion a matter of convenience or worldly profit leads to idolatry.

TOPIC.—The results of disunion.

OUTLINE.—I. Jeroboam strengthening the kingdom. II. The beginnings of idolatry. III. Breaking God's laws. IV. Warned by a prophet.

TIME.—B. C. 975.

PLACES.—Jeroboam's capital, Shechem, later at Tirzah. Religious centers, Bethel and Dan.

PARALLEL ACCOUNT.—2 Chron. 11: 13-17.

READ.—1 Kings 12, 13.

INTRODUCTION.—Rehoboam's effort to restore to his kingdom the ten tribes that had revolted, proved fruitless and disastrous. He found Jeroboam's kingdom too powerful for him to cope with safely and gave up the attempt for the time being. Furthermore he had been warned of God not to engage in war with the kingdom of Israel. During the first three years of his reign Rehoboam gave attention to strengthening his kingdom, and we read that the people "walked in the way of David and Solomon" (2 Chron. 11: 17) during that time. Later he turned away from the Lord and his people with him, and as a punishment for their transgression of the law of the Lord, "Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem" (2 Chron. 12: 2). Although Rehoboam and his people humbled themselves through the warning of the prophet Shemaiah, the king of Egypt made Judah subject to him, but did not destroy the nation. He took away the shields of gold from the house of the Lord, and Rehoboam replaced them with shields of brass. Rehoboam made a bad beginning in his entrance upon his reign, and his

administration and character were far from acceptable to God. The character of his reign of seventeen years is summed up in the words, "And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord" (2 Chron. 12: 14).

COMMENTARY.—I. JEROBOAM STRENGTHENING THE KINGDOM (vs. 25-27). 25. **built Shechem**—Jeroboam selected Shechem as the capital of his kingdom. He erected buildings necessary for that purpose and fortified the city. The location was favorable, being central, and the place had many historic events clustering about it. Abraham pitched his tent there upon entering Canaan for the first time. There Jacob bought a portion of land which he gave to Joseph. Shechem was situated between Gerizim and Ebal from which blessings and curses, respectively, were pronounced upon Israel. It was one of the six cities of refuge. There Joshua gathered the people shortly before his death and delivered to them his parting words. At Shechem all Israel assembled to receive Rehoboam as king, but upon his failure to yield to reasonable demands ten tribes went over to Jeroboam. A few years later the king removed his capital to Tirzah, a place a little north of Shechem. **mount Ephraim**—In the hill-country, or upon the mountainous ridge which extends for fifty miles north and south through the central part of Palestine. Jeroboam belonged to the tribe of Ephraim. **went out from thence**—With Shechem as a fortified center he built other fortifications at important points to keep out his enemies. **built Penuel**—This is the Peniel of

Genesis 32: 24-32 and means "face of God." It was here that Jacob wrestled all night with the angel of God, and gained the victory, his name being changed from Jacob to Israel. Penuel was situated on the river Jabbok, about twenty miles east of where it flows into the Jordan. It was fortified to protect the kingdom from Assyrian invasion, since Penuel was on the great caravan road to the East.

26. Jeroboam said in his heart—He said one thing in his heart and quite another to his people. It is no uncommon thing for one to say in his heart what he would not for the world say to others. We are judged by men largely by what we say with our lips, but God judges us by what we say in our hearts. **kingdom return**—The king realized that the people who had so eagerly pledged allegiance to him were liable to forsake him and return to the kingdom from which they revolted, should some provocation arise. He knew the temper of his people, and as a sagacious ruler he foresaw what might occur. **27. if this people.... sacrifice.... at Jerusalem**—Jeroboam recognized the fact that the tribes that had seceded and come over to him had not in so doing forsaken the God and the religion of their fathers. They would continue to worship the God of Israel, and Jerusalem was the true center of that worship. He was wise enough not to attempt to establish at once a new religion although he knew that the repeated visits of his people to Jerusalem for worship as the law required (Deut. 16: 16) would be likely to win them back to the parent kingdom. The religious instinct in man is deep-seated and is easily able to overcome even national and patriotic considerations. **their lord... Rehoboam**—This was a confession that Rehoboam was their lawful sovereign. Jeroboam felt that his hold upon the people was, at best, insecure. **shall kill me**—Jeroboam was influenced in his course by fear for his personal safety as well as by his ambition. In comparing the motives which actuated the two kings but little difference is found. Both seem to have been moved by selfish impulses. The true welfare of their respective peoples was disregarded. They were willing to sacrifice the good of the people for their own personal advancement.

II. THE BEGINNINGS OF IDOLATRY (vs. 28-30).
28. took counsel—He surely did not take counsel of God. In such an important matter he wished others to share the responsibility, and consulted those who were his supporters in the kingdom. It is a fatal mistake to leave God out of one's counsels. **made two calves of gold**—It is worthy of note that the images made by Jeroboam were like that made by Aaron in the wilderness (Exod. 32:4). Both men were familiar with the image of the ox from their acquaintance with the religion of Egypt, and Jeroboam may have been influenced by that knowledge in making the golden calves. It is more probable that the golden calves were suggested by the oxen in the temple upon which rested the molten sea. **it is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem**—Jeroboam desired to make the people feel that he was acting in their interest, and wished to make religion convenient. If this had been his real motive, his sin would have been great, for whoever makes his religion a matter of convenience loses sight of the nature of true religion. The real object, however, of setting up the golden calves was to keep his people from going to Jerusalem, fearing that in associating with the people of Judah they might be inclined to turn from him and go over to Rehoboam. **behold thy gods**—Jeroboam was far from being a deeply religious man, and he doubtless believed that the people could worship the true God, while considering the golden calf as a mere

symbol of the divine presence. We observe that he used almost the exact words spoken by Aaron more than five hundred years before (Exod. 32: 4).

29. in Beth-el.... Dan—Bethel means "house of God." It was a sacred place. Abraham had built an altar there (Gen. 12: 8), there Jacob saw his vision and gave the place its name (Gen. 28: 11-19), the ark of God was at one time stationed at Bethel (Judg. 20: 18, R. V.) and there Samuel judged Israel (1 Sam. 7: 16). The city was situated about fifteen miles north of Jerusalem, and was in the southern part of Jeroboam's kingdom. Dan lay in the extreme northern part, thus giving all the people of the northern kingdom easy access to one or the other of these shrines. Dan had also a history as a religious center. An idolatrous graven image had been set up and was presided over by descendants of Moses (Judg. 18: 27-30). **30. became a sin**—Whatever may have been the design of Jeroboam, the outcome was such as might reasonably have been expected. The worship at these shrines became idolatrous, and both the first and the second commandments were broken. **even unto Dan**—It is probable that, since Bethel was so well known and easy of access, it was not considered necessary to mention that place, and it is stated definitely that the people went to Dan, which was far away.

III. BREAKING GOD'S LAWS (vs. 31-33).

31. house of high places—It was customary to erect idolatrous shrines upon the tops of hills which were often covered with groves. Jeroboam built a house of worship at Bethel and one at Dan, while God had declared that the temple at Jerusalem was the true place of worship. **lowest of the people**—"Among all the people."—R. V. Instead of employing the Levites as priests according to God's arrangement, Jeroboam took any that pleased him for the purpose. The Levites would not wish to officiate at idolatrous altars and probably went to Rehoboam's kingdom. **32. feast in the eighth month**—The king wished to provide a feast for his people to correspond to the feast of Tabernacles, but in order to make it unlike that feast he appointed it in the eighth month instead of the seventh. **he offered upon the altar**—Either personally or through the priests of his own appointing he sacrificed to the golden calves of his own making.

33. devised of his own heart—The king left God out of his counsels. He "said in his heart" (v. 26), and "devised of his own heart" an order of worship which was far from pleasing to the Lord. **IV. WARNED BY A PROPHET (vs. 1-6).** God did not leave Jeroboam wholly to himself, for while the king was offering a sacrifice upon the altar the prophet of the Lord foretold the sacrifice of priests upon that altar, and gave such unmistakable signs to substantiate his authority as a prophet that it would have been mere presumption to attempt to pass it off lightly. The outlook for the system of religion that the king had "devised of his own heart" was far from encouraging, yet he persevered in his course and won the title often repeated in the sacred history, "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin."

QUESTIONS.—What cities did Jeroboam build, and why? What did the king say in his heart? What is meant by the house of David? At what places did Jeroboam establish places of worship? What reason did he give for setting up the golden calves in those places? What was the real reason for appointing those two places of worship? Whom did he make priests? What feast did he appoint, and how did it differ from the feast in Judah? What commandments did Jeroboam violate? What warning was sent to him?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. Rehoboam's reign. (1) Its duration. (2) His commendable acts. (3) His censurable acts. (4) The calamity which visited him and his kingdom. (5) Lessons to be learned from his life. 2. The outlook for Jeroboam. 3. The two kings compared.

II. THEME.—Rejecting God.

III. THE WORLDLY-WISE RULER.—1. Measures to strengthen the kingdom. 2. Jeroboam's keen insight into the possibilities of his people leaving him. 3. Attention given to the religious character of his people. 4. An impulsive people. 5. Jeroboam's ingenuity in satisfying the religious instinct of his people and at the same time turning them away from association with the subjects of the kingdom of Judah. 6. The two-faced policy. 7. Jeroboam's title. 8. His selfish ambition as displayed in his policy toward the religious life of Israel resulted in the degradation of the nation.

IV. RELIGION AND CONVENIENCE.—1. A broad distinction between religion and secular interests. 2. Religion has in it the element of self-denial. 3. The danger of subordinating religious duty and privilege to worldly gain or ease. 4. While Jeroboam's real purpose was not to make religion easy to his people, he thus represented it to them. 5. True religion dies when devotion, effort and self-denial cease.

V. THE BROKEN LAW.—1. Jerusalem had been divinely designated as the center for religious worship. Jeroboam established two different centers. 2. The provisions of the first and the second commandments. The king ruthlessly violated both by making the golden calves and setting them up. 3. Levi was the priestly tribe according to God's appointment. Jeroboam utterly disregarded that arrangement. 4. The feast of Tabernacles. The time changed. 5. Jeroboam offering sacrifices (v. 1). 6. The source of all the trouble. It was in the heart of Jeroboam.

VI. IMPRESSIVE WARNING.—1. The prophet. 2. The message. 3. Its reception. 4. The signs given. 5. Jeroboam asking for mercy. 6. See the fulfillment of the prophecy in 2 Kings 23: 15, 16. 7. The mercy of God in warning people of their danger. 8. The warnings given in the scriptures. 9. The warnings which come through God's providences. 10. The Holy Spirit is faithful to give warning.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—The results of disunion.

- I. The king feared a reaction.
- II. The king abused national religion.
- III. The king was warned and chastened.

I. The king feared a reaction. There appears to have been no thought in the minds of the ten tribes, that the choice of a separate ruler would break their connection with the worship at the temple in Jerusalem. They did not foresee that political disruption would naturally destroy the religious unity of God's chosen people, the end of which would prove utter failure to both kingdoms. The division came through the guilt of both kingdoms and that guilt was the germ of their destruction. Between them arose an incurable schism which would stand through all future generations. When Jeroboam was established as king over the northern kingdom and affairs began to take shape in the new order of things, there arose misgivings in his heart as to the permanency of his throne. "Uneasy lies

the head that wears a crown." An evil conscience makes the stout-hearted and strong-willed timid and anxious, so that they seem to see dangers where there are none, and then to insure their own safety they devise evil methods for their own security. So it was with Jeroboam. There seems to have been but little veneration in his temperament. Had he chosen to do so he might have followed a higher and purer guidance than his own personal misgivings and his own arbitrary will. He might at last have consulted Ahijah, who had given him, when he was still a subject, the divine promise and sanction of royalty. He was guilty of the sin of worldly policy. He trusted in that and not in the living God. His own petty kingship was more to him than the infinite majesty of Jehovah. He was determined to strengthen his house though he should dishonor the "house of the Lord."

II. The king abused national religion. Iniquity assumes its most hateful form when it devotes to its own evil ends things sacred and divine. Jeroboam's policy was an appeal to tribal independence, to selfish indulgence, to former memories and withal a bold attempt to deceive the devout. It is the greatest tyranny when the ruler of a nation makes himself the master of the faith and consciences of his subjects. Jeroboam broke the second commandment under pretense of helping the people to keep the first. His religious institutions formed the real and lasting wall of separation between the two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. Jeroboam's sin cast its dark shadow across the reigns of fifteen of the kings of Israel. It was the prime cause of that captivity from which the ten tribes have never returned. It was the sin of heresy. 1. He chose his own places of worship. 2. He chose his own modes of worship. 3. He chose his own times of worship. His sin led to a division in the Jewish church. It was the sin of schism. He assumed to conduct the worship of the true God in unauthorized places, with unauthorized rites and by unauthorized ministers.

III. The king was warned and chastened. The sin of Jeroboam was not consummated without protest. Warning and mercy came before destruction. Punishments are not arbitrary but are the legitimate issues of crime against God. An unnamed man of God came out of Judah to rebuke the silence of Israel and to protest in God's name against the new worship. Jeroboam with the ten tribes was powerless against the unprotected missionary. In him we see the helplessness of a wicked man in the hands of an offended God. The behavior of the prophet presents a fine example of moral dignity and conscious strength. The hand that would have slain him was withered. The man who cursed his message besought his prayers. In vain does the enemy stretch forth his hand against those who are under God's protection. Our Father is the Mighty One of Israel.

T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

<p> IDOLATRY WAS ISRAEL'S BESSETTING SIN. WHAT IS YOURS? IS IT COVETOUSNESS? PRIDE? APPETITE? </p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>I</td> <td>VI</td> </tr> <tr> <td>II</td> <td>VII</td> </tr> <tr> <td>III</td> <td>VIII</td> </tr> <tr> <td>IV</td> <td>IX</td> </tr> <tr> <td>V</td> <td>X</td> </tr> </table>	I	VI	II	VII	III	VIII	IV	IX	V	X	<p> YOU MAY LEAD MANY INTO SIN OR TO CHRIST. WHICH SHALL IT BE? YOUR HISTORY IS BEING WRITTEN. </p>
I	VI											
II	VII											
III	VIII											
IV	IX											
V	X											

Practical Applications

"Jeroboam said in his heart" (v. 26). He thought and planned before he executed. Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts (Matt. 15:19). Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh (Matt. 12:34). The devil put it into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus (John 13:2). God has condemned every human heart as being "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9).

"If this people go up... then shall the heart of this people turn again" (v. 27). The promise had been given to Jeroboam: "I will take thee and thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel, and it shall be, if thou wilt walk in my ways I will be with thee and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and I will give Israel unto thee" (1 Kings 11:37, 38). Jeroboam doubted and devised means for his own safety. Faith would have said, "God has promised. I am safer to incur the apparent danger of losing my throne, by going in the path of duty, than to seek to keep it by the use of unlawful means." Doubt of God's all-sufficiency is the beginning of all our sinful planning. We want a certain position. We can obtain it by a little tricky maneuvering. We desire success in a business transaction and prevarication seems the sure road to it. Doubt that God can give us these without our interference is the first temptation. Just here Jacob fell. He was promised the birthright. Instead of waiting for God to bestow the gift, he obtained it by deceit and fraud.

"The king took counsel" (v. 28). Jeroboam attempted to meet human difficulties with human stratagems. He took the case wholly in his own hands. 1. He changed the SYMBOLS (v. 28). Instead of the divine forms of worship he gave the people human images. He made calves. He said, "Behold thy gods." The work Aaron had done. The words Aaron had spoken (Exod. 32:4). Skepticism is not original. Infidelity gives the world no new thoughts. Ingersoll used the old arguments of Paine, as he, in turn, used those of the infidels before him. 2. He changed LOCALITIES (v. 29). He kept Israel from Jerusalem, the real place of worship, and sent them to Bethel and Dan. We need to be careful how we popularize religion. Costly churches, fascinating music, elaborate decoration and sensational subjects may be only lowering the standard to Bethel and Dan, instead of leading the people up to Jerusalem. 3. He changed the PRIESTHOOD. He instituted a new order. He repudiated the tribe of Levi, God's chosen spiritual leaders. Churches do this to-day. They allow ministers to serve them and give official position to those who drink, smoke, gamble, dance and attend the theater. They ignore the fact that they have no authority in God's word for choosing any but men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom (Acts 6:3-5). 4. He changed the TIMES (v. 32). The dates of the annual festival were divinely ordered, but he deliberately planned to turn the people from the ancient ritual.

"This thing became a sin" (v. 30). The king never intended the people should become idolaters. He only meant them to worship Jehovah through the symbol of the calves. But "this thing became a sin." The second commandment broken, it grew easier to break the first. You may not be in danger of relapsing into idolatry, but there are subtle forms of evil you need to watch closely against, such as spiritualism, Christian science and the new theology, all of which undermine faith in God. There is also danger of lapsing into a condition of lukewarmness.

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—One sin leads to another.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

Jeroboam

{ Broke commandments
Disobeyed God
Made Israel to sin

HIS TITLE: Jeroboam the son of Nebat,
who made Israel to sin

A review. It is necessary to cover the simple story of the last lesson in a short review. Call out by questioning the persons, the places and the acts performed. Call attention to good acts and warn against the evil. In connection with the review tell briefly the story of Rehoboam's reign. Study it carefully so that you may impress the truths that the children are capable of receiving. Tell of his efforts to follow the good ways of his grandfather David. Then tell how he became careless and failed to obey God, and of the prophet who was sent to warn him against his evil ways. Tell how he listened and humbled himself, and yet he had sinned so deeply that God let the king of Egypt take away great treasure from him.

Broken commandments. In a few words, or by questioning, make plain to the class what the Ten Commandments are and their source. Repeat the first commandment and have the class repeat it with you. Explain it and show how Jeroboam broke it. Tell what the second commandment means and apply it to the acts of the king. People in India and China worship idols. It would be helpful if you could have some heathen idol or a picture of one to be shown the children and show them how foolish and wicked it is to bow down to them.

Disobedience. Tell what God had said about the right place for worship, the persons who should be made priests and the feast of Tabernacles which God had appointed, then show what Jeroboam did in disobedience to all that God had said. Be prepared with a simple story to illustrate disobedience to parents or teachers. It will answer the purpose to draw out from some one in the class such a story. It was very wrong for the king to disobey God's law, and it is wrong for children to disobey God.

Making others sin. Show what authority and influence a king has over his subjects. Show that it is not necessary for the child to do wrong because another wants him to, but make it impressive that it is wicked to influence another to sin. No one would want such a title as was given to Jeroboam. Frank would not like to be known as, "Frank, who tried to make George and Fred to sin."

The central thought. It is intensely practical. Trace Jeroboam's course. He got the kingdom that rightfully belonged to Rehoboam. Mention the different sins that he committed as a consequence of that step. A mother got her little boy ready for Sunday-school and told him to go directly there. He secretly put some marbles in his pocket and started. He met a boy who asked him to play and he did so, but lost some in the ditch and stole a few belonging to the other, and on going home told his mother he had been to Sunday-school when he had not. One sin led to another. Ask the class to give you illustrations of this principle. Make the truth impressive.

LESSON III

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Jan. 9.—Asa's reign.—2 Chron. 15: 1-15. Tu.—Asa's zeal.—2 Chron. 14: 1-8; 1 Kings 15: 9-15. Wed.—Foreign aid.—2 Chron. 16: 1-6. Th.—Asa's victory.—2 Chron. 14: 9-15. Fr.—Prophecy of Azariah.—2 Chron. 15: 1-19. Sat.—Asa reproved.—2 Chron. 16: 7-14. Su.—Serving Jehovah.—Psa. 16: 1-11.

ASA'S GOOD REIGN IN JUDAH.—2 Chron. 15: 1-15.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 1, 2)

SUPT.—1 And the Spirit of God came upon Aza-ri'ah the son of Oded:

School.—2 And he went out to meet A'sa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, A'sa, and all Ju'dah and Ben'ja-min; The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.

3 Now for a long season Is'ra-el hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law.

4 But when they in their trouble did turn unto the Lord God of Is'ra-el, and sought him, he was found of them.

5 And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries.

6 And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city: for God did vex them with all adversity.

7 Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded.

8 And when A'sa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Ju'dah and Ben'ja-min, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephra-im, and renewed the altar of the Lord, that was before the porch of the Lord.

9 And he gathered all Ju'dah and Ben'ja-min, and the strangers with them out of Ephra-im and Ma-nas'seh, and out of Sim'e-on: for they fell to him out of Is'ra-el in abundance, when they saw that the Lord his God was with him.

10 So they gathered themselves together at Je-ru'sa-lem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of A'sa.

11 And they offered unto the Lord the same time, of the spoil which they had brought, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep.

12 And they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul;

13 That whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Is'ra-el should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman.

14 And they sware unto the Lord with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets.

15 And all Ju'dah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them: and the Lord gave them rest round about.

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*AMERICAN REVISION

1 And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded: 2 and he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: Jehovah is with you, while ye are with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you. 3 Now for a long season Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law: 4 but when in their distress they turned unto Jehovah, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them. 5 And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in; but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the lands. 6 And they were broken in pieces, nation against nation, and city against city; for God did vex them with all adversity. 7 But be ye strong, and let not your hands be slack: for your work shall be rewarded.

8 And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominations out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from the hill-country of Ephraim; and he renewed the altar of Jehovah, that was before the porch of Jehovah. 9 And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and them that sojourned with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that Jehovah his God was with him. 10 So they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa. 11 And they sacrificed unto Jehovah in that day, of the spoil which they had brought, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep. 12 And they entered into the covenant to seek Jehovah, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul; 13 and that whosoever would not seek Jehovah, the God of Israel, should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman. 14 And they sware unto Jehovah with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets. 15 And all Judah rejoiced at the oath; for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them: and Jehovah gave them rest round about.

SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded. 2 Chron. 15: 7.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—There is success and joy in working with God.

TOPIC.—The groundwork of a revival.

OUTLINE.—I. Azariah's prophecy. II. Asa encouraged. III. A great assembly. IV. A solemn covenant.

TIME.—B. C. 940.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

READ.—2 Chron. 14-16; 1 Kings 15: 9-24.

INTRODUCTION.—In this series of lessons we pass rapidly over the history of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, but in order to a proper understanding of the lessons as they are presented it is necessary to have a knowledge of the broad outlines of the intervening events in the two kingdoms. After reigning seventeen years over Judah Rehoboam died, and his son Abijah, also called Abijam, ascended the throne. While of Abijah it is said that "he walked in all the sins of his

father," yet with the help of God, whom he acknowledged when about to engage in battle, he conquered the hosts of Israel and took from them several of their cities. After three years Abijah died and Asa became king. In the northern kingdom Jeroboam completed twenty-two years on the throne and was succeeded by his son Nadab, who followed in the wicked ways of his father. His reign was short, for he was slain in a conspiracy by Baasha, who became king, thus wresting the throne from the family of Jeroboam, who belonged to the tribe of Ephraim, and taking it over to the tribe of Issachar. He had been reigning eleven years at the time of this lesson. While there were frequent changes in the lines of the kings of Israel, the family of David, of the tribe of Judah, was represented upon the throne of Judah until Christ appeared.

COMMENTARY.—I. AZARIAH'S PROPHECY (vs. 1-7). 1. Spirit of God.—He moved upon the minds and hearts of people in Old Testament times, as also in later periods. He is the third Person of the Trinity. Azariah.—We know nothing of this prophet aside from what is here recorded. A

prophet is one who brings a message from God. It may declare future events or, as in this place, it may be a message of instruction and encouragement.

2. to meet Asa—Asa and his army were returning from their victory over the Ethiopian host under Zerah. Asa had cried unto the Lord in submission and faith, and his triumph was complete. A large amount of spoil came into his hands. **the Lord is with you**—The condition upon which the Lord was with Asa was that Asa took his place on God's side. This message came both as an encouragement and a warning. No one can expect the presence, favor and help of the Lord unless he is obedient to him and earnest and trustful. **if ye seek him**—Compare the words of Jesus in Matt. 7: 7. **he will forsake you**—This truth was verified in the history of God's chosen people again and again. Those who in their hearts and by their actions reject God are rejected by him. It is an awful calamity to be forsaken by the Lord.

3. for a long season...without the true God—Various views are held regarding these words. Some think reference is made to spiritual conditions in the kingdom of Israel, while others believe that the state of Judah under Rehoboam and Abijah is intended. It is maintained by others that it is a prophecy of future conditions among the Jews, and still others hold that the words are applicable to the times of the judges. Taken in connection with the fourth verse the sense seems to be that many times they had been without the true God and a proper regard for his worship and law, but whenever they turned to him and sought him they found him. **a teaching priest**—There were always priests, but often they were faithless, and through their failure the people were not instructed in the law. **4. in their trouble**—Men and nations are inclined to forget God, but when trouble and distress come they are often led to turn unto him for help.

5. in those times—When God's law was disregarded. **no peace...great vexations**—God has said that there is no peace to the wicked. They may be outwardly prosperous, but within is turmoil and strife. This was the condition of the nation in their rebellion against God. **6. nation was destroyed of nation**—The kingdoms of Judah and Israel waged frequent and destructive wars with each other. **city of city**—In the times of the judges it was not uncommon for one city to be attacked by another. **adversity**—God permitted hostile nations to make inroads into Israel as judgments upon the nation because of their sin. **7. be ye strong therefore**—In view of God's past dealings with his people there was great encouragement for them to be submissive, trustful and firm. Idolatry had gained a strong hold upon the nation under the preceding kings and it required courage on the part of the king and those in authority to take an effective stand against it. **rewarded**—This was a divinely given promise.

II. ASA ENCOURAGED (v. 8). 8. the prophecy of Oded—It is evident that either the words, "Azariah the son of," have been omitted or the word, "Oded," has crept into the text from a marginal note, for the prophet here mentioned is the same one whose name is given in the first verse. **took courage**—There were two strong reasons why Asa should be full of courage. He had gained a remarkable victory over the Ethiopians through the help of the Lord, and the prophet had come to him with a most inspiring message. **put away...idols**—His courage moved him to action. He had already made an effort to destroy idolatry (2 Chron. 14: 3), but the prophet's message, following his great victory, urged him on to another strong effort to com-

plete the work. **out of the cities**—Asa considered that his responsibility did not end with Judah and Benjamin, but extended to all the territory providentially under his control. His father had taken from Israel the cities Bethel and Jeshanah (2 Chron. 13: 19). **mount Ephraim**—The mountainous region of the tribe of Ephraim. **renewed the altar of the Lord**—This was the great brazen altar (2 Chron. 4: 1), the altar of burnt-offering, and stood before the porch of the temple. "Some sixty years had passed since the temple was built, and this altar may for that reason have needed repair; or it may have been polluted by idolatry, and needed renewal."

III. A GREAT ASSEMBLY (vs. 9-11). 9. all Judah and Benjamin—The tribes which constituted the kingdom of Judah. Asa desired that the reforms he had undertaken should be most thorough and wide-spread, hence his calling an assembly of all the people. **strangers**—Those belonging to the kingdom of Israel who were drawn to Judah by the great reformation there in progress. **in abundance**—A genuine revival of religion always attracts the people. **the Lord his God was with him**—The Lord was with him because he took his position on the side of truth and righteousness, and did his duty in the destruction of idolatry. Idolatry was prevalent in the kingdom of Israel and many of the people there longed for something better, and when they saw that God was with Judah they flocked thither. **10. gathered...in the third month**—The assembly was held at Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost, fifty days after the Pass-over.

11. they offered unto the Lord—They who expect help from the Lord make their offering to him. **of the spoil which they had brought**—This is what they had taken from the war with the Ethiopians. **seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep**—In accordance with the design of the festival, by far the greater number of sacrifices were thanksgiving or peace offerings, of which the fat only was burned, and the rest used for food during the festival.—*Bahr*.

IV. A SOLEMN COVENANT (vs. 12-15). 12. entered into a covenant—1. The people realized their need. 2. They made their offering to God. 3. They made solemn vows to the Lord. It is an easy-going, worldly religion that does not take hold upon the consciences of men. **all their heart... all their soul**—The expression used includes the entire being, physical, intellectual and moral. The pledge made to seek the Lord thus could not fail of results. **13. would not seek the Lord, etc.**—Thus no toleration was given to idolatry, so that it must be rooted out; and, that this covenant might be properly binding, they confirmed it with an oath, and God accepted them and their services.—*Clarke*. See Exod. 22: 20; Deut. 13: 6-15; 17: 2-6. **14. with a loud voice**—They believed they were doing the right thing and were not ashamed. They were intensely in earnest. They were exercised in a good cause. **trumpets**—Crooked horns. **cornets**—Straight horns. **15. rejoiced**—The people had done their part and God fulfilled his promise. Joy forms a large part of true religion.

QUESTIONS.—How long had Asa been king at the time of this lesson? What kings had reigned before him in Judah? Who was king in Israel at this time? What prophet came to Asa? What message did he bring? By what two things was Asa encouraged? What great work did Asa undertake? What was the object in calling the assembly of all the nation? Describe the sacrifices that were made. What covenant did the people make? How was their earnestness shown? What were the feelings of the people? What reasons were there for rejoicing?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. The first lesson of the year had to do with the two Israelitish kingdoms, the second with Israel, the third with Judah. 2. Trace the intervening history of Israel. 3. Trace the intervening history of Judah. 4. The attitude of the two kingdoms toward each other. 5. Asa's first attempts at reform.

II. THEME.—The blessedness of being on God's side.

III. HISTORICAL FACTS.—1. Note the circumstances under which the prophet met the king. Review briefly Asa's great victory. 2. Azariah's message. (1) Personal. (2) Direct. (3) Timely. (4) Effective. 3. Asa at work. (1) Destroying idolatry. (2) Renewing the brazen altar. 4. An appeal to the people. (1) The assembly called. (2) The place of the gathering. (3) The time. (4) The character of the assembly. (5) A sacrificing assembly. 5. The covenant. (1) The parties to the covenant. (2) The two-fold character of the covenant. (a) To seek the Lord. (b) To destroy those who would not seek the Lord. (3) The earnestness with which the people entered into the covenant. (4) The joy occasioned by the taking of the oath. (5) The effect of the covenant upon the nation.

IV. SPIRITUAL TRUTHS.—1. Taking sides with God. (1) The way is always open for us to do it. (2) Sufficient light is afforded to us to take our place on God's side. (3) The will is brought into exercise. (4) The distinction between the sinful side and the right side. (5) Evidences that one is on the side of God. (6) The results of being on his side. 2. Seeking God. (1) The promises given elsewhere in scripture. (2) The manner of seeking God. (3) The consequence of not seeking God is death (v. 13). 3. Piety and service. Those whose hearts are right find work to do for God. 4. There is vexation and distress for those who fail to harken to God. 5. There is reward for those who work with God. 6. There is blessing in making a full and lasting covenant with God.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—The groundwork of a revival.

- I. Whole-heartedness in seeking God.
- II. Internal reforms, external discipline.

I. Whole-heartedness in seeking God. Not as a flatterer, courting princely favor, but as a deeply earnest prophet, Azariah greeted the king returning in triumph from battle. "The Spirit of God came upon Azariah" (v. 1). We know nothing of him beyond the short record of this chapter. A man is important to the world only for the work he does. The prophet's message was so direct, so specific and so personal as to arouse undivided attention in King Asa. The promise was so great and the conditions so reasonable as to inspire courage in the heart of the king. He saw his highest duty was the maintenance of the worship of Jehovah. He determined to do all in his power to establish his kingdom on that basis. He, a young prince, unknown to fame, with no special gifts or endowments, with restricted dominion and encompassed with difficulties, was to stem the tide of sin and shame with which his great ancestor had flooded the land. Emphasis is laid upon the whole-heartedness of the people in seeking God. They made the search that always finds. "They entered into a covenant... with all their heart and with all their soul." They made it a national act. The heart of

a revival lies in the renewal of the covenant of the church with God. An awakened church is the pioneer of an awakened world. That old Jewish revival was attended with a great influx of converts from without, "when they saw that the Lord his God was with him" (v. 9). Every true leader rallies others about him. The depth of piety which characterizes the leader will appear in his followers.

II. Internal reforms, external discipline. There took place a thorough reformation of public and private morals. True revivals are marked by marvelous transformation of character and reformations in the life. King Asa's reforms were practically of two kinds, moral and religious. It is not implied that he believed that the one could be separated from the other. One token of seeking God is the casting out of idols. They must be cast out, utterly abolished by the "expulsive force of a new affection." King Asa's reforms resulted in purging and elevating the tone of public morality by suppressing the idolatry which sanctioned and consecrated impurity. Idolatry was immorality concentrated in its most hideous forms. We read in 1 Kings 15: 12, "He took away the Sodomites out of the land." What an abyss of corruption does this one brief sentence reveal to us! No religious zeal could have been genuine in a king, which did not sweep the land clean of them. The suppression of the Sodomites was a first step toward the religious reformation. It was a public proclamation of a revival of faith before the world. The king next "removed all the idols that his fathers had made" (1 Kings 15: 12). What were those ancestors doing that they permitted any rivalry between the gods of the heathen and the Holy One of Israel? "The evil that men do lives after them." As a result of King Asa's righteous policy "the Lord gave them rest," quietness, prosperity and growth. Such awakenings and reformations are often followed by periods of temporal prosperity. It never does harm to an individual or a community or nation to turn to God. There is no civilizing power equal to that of true religion. There is no unifying power equal to that of true religion. The time was opportune for this revival in Judah. King Asa and his army had just been victorious in battle. If they truly acknowledged God as their captain and deliverer they must go farther. At that critical time God sent his prophet to tell them on what conditions he would be with them. They had but to look upon their brethren of the ten tribes to see what misery had already befallen them. Without priests and Levites and under an unauthorized form of worship they had lapsed into great sin. There was enough of sin in Judah to bring them to the same condition unless they made radical effort to rid themselves of it and to return to God in true repentance and reformation in heart and life. The course which King Asa took proved his own loyalty and resulted in the uplifting of his people and the advance of true religion in Judah.

T. E. A.

Blackboard Exercise

ASA'S REIGN WAS LIKE AN OASIS IN THE DESERT.		YOU ARE A RULER—WHERE IS YOUR KINGDOM?
RULERS HAVE GREAT RESPONSIBILITIES. WE SHOULD PRAY FOR THEM.		WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO IMPROVE IT? IF YOU RULE WELL YOUR REWARD IS SURE.

Practical Applications

"The Lord is with you, while ye be with him" (v. 2). To be good is to be like God. To do right is to follow the righteous One. Right doing always brings rest. The restful man is content even with mean things and can not be covetous (Phil. 4: 11). He is satisfied with God and can not fret at trials or training. He makes "himself of no reputation" (Phil. 2: 7) and can not grieve because of lack of appreciation. He looks on the things of "others" (Phil. 2: 4) and has no time to worry over his own. He makes the Holy One his example, and though his life be full of trial, toil and persecution, no outward conflict can disturb his inward peace. Men hated Jesus, hunted him, ignored him, maligned him, crucified him, but from the cradle to the cross he went on his quiet way, doing always that which was good and right (Acts 10: 38).

"Be ye strong....and let not your hands be weak" (v. 7). The battle is not ours but God's. We are identified with him. Our interests are lost in his. "In selfish prayer we beat the winds. Nothing is sure but the purposes of God. No interests are safe but his. No cause is secure but his. Until we get our concerns in the line of his plans, we can be sure of nothing. But when we are so united to God that his interests and his will are ours, prayer becomes a prophecy. Its success is a foregone conclusion."

"For your work shall be rewarded" (v. 7). Charles Cullis, when he went to God in "great straits," used frequently to say, "Lord, it is such an easy thing for thee to do this; it is nothing for thee." And God would do it. "Help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on thee" (2 Chron. 14: 11). To rely on God is to rest in God. "We which have believed do enter into rest" (Heb. 4: 3). In a children's meeting a manly little boy, really anxious to be a Christian, said, "But I can't, for all the boys swear and do other bad things, and I can't go off by myself." He was told that the Lord could deliver him and take the desire for doing wrong out of his heart.

"Entered into a covenant" (v. 12). "Every nation had its God. When a Jew said, Thou art our God, he acknowledged God's ownership of him and all his belongings. That any other nation should prevail against Judah, meant to Jewish thought a victory of men over the living God. This gave deep significance to Jewish prayer on the eve of battle. Not only was his cause God's cause, by his being identified with God, but he and all he had belonged to God. His success was God's success and his defeat was God's defeat. By the right of creation we belong to God. By the right of faithful and undying friendship we belong to God. By right of eternal redemption we belong to God. By the right of purchase with the blood of Christ we belong to God. Whatever concerns us concerns him. Our sorrow is his sorrow. Our joy is his joy. If it is best for us that he be delivered, it is as much to God as to us that he shall send deliverance."

"And the Lord gave them rest" (v. 15). "He hath given us rest on every side" (14: 7). "He maketh me to lie down" (Psa. 23: 2). Mark Guy Pearse says: "If there is one thing a sheep can do for itself, it is to lie down. A sheep may need feeding, or leading, need to be delivered from enemies, to be brought back to the fold; but lying down, it is able to do that for itself! Many think so, and never go to the great Shepherd for rest. They seek to lie down, but can not. They are always trying to find this power, but in vain." The rest of soul that we attempt to manufacture for ourselves is always a disappointing failure.

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—There is success and comfort in being on the right side.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

ASA

{ On the right side
Encouraged
Destroying idolatry
Helping his people

ON WHICH SIDE ARE WE ?

Preliminary. You can profitably spend two or three minutes upon the review, impressing again the thought that one sin leads to another. There are two stories in the history between the lesson of last Sabbath and that of to-day that you would do well to prepare thoroughly and tell the class in a few words. The first is the story of Abijah's conquering Jeroboam in battle and taking two cities, one of them being Bethel, where Jeroboam had set up a golden calf. Abijah honored the Lord and depended on him as he entered the fight. The other story is that of Asa and his war with Zerah the Ethiopian. Tell how he called upon the Lord for help and his prayer was answered. The victory came because he trusted God.

On the right side. Show that Asa was on the right side because he obeyed God and trusted him. Jeroboam had taken the wrong side by leading his people into idolatry. On a blackboard or on a piece of paper draw a perpendicular line and at the top on one side place the word "right," and on the other the word "wrong." On the "right" side of the line write "truth," "honesty," "love," "kindness," "obedience," "faith," or other words that are appropriate. On the "wrong" side place the opposites of those on the "right" side. Call out from the children, by questioning, what shows which side we are on. Show the class why it is better to be on the side of right than to be on the side of evil.

Encouraged. Two things gave Asa courage. One was that the Lord helped him to win a great victory over his enemies, and the other was that the Lord sent a prophet to encourage him. Show how the Bible is given to us to encourage us to do right. Make it plain to the children that by doing things that are pleasing to God they will be strengthened and encouraged to do other things that will please him. If one places himself upon God's side he will have courage to do his duty.

Working. Asa was a king and had his work to do. In the lesson it was to destroy idolatry, and repair the altar of the Lord. Point out some things that children will do if they choose God's side. Those who love God are ready to do that which will please him. Refer to the child Samuel who served Eli in the house of the Lord. Call attention to the children who gave hosannas to Jesus.

Helping others. Bring out the story of the great assembly, telling who came, why they came, what they did, and the result of their coming together. Asa was on God's side, was encouraged to do a great work, and he wanted his people to have the same spirit. Call attention to the sacrifices that were made to God and show that we should give our hearts, our time, our service and our wealth to him. Explain the covenant that Judah made, and teach the children the covenant they ought to make, which is to serve the Lord faithfully.

LESSON IV

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Jan. 16.—Zimri defeated. —1 Kings 16:8-20. Tu.—House of Omri.—1 Kings 16:21-28. Wed.—Ahab's corrupting example.—1 Kings 16:29-33. Th.—Statutes of Omri.—Mic. 6:1-16. Fr.—The infection of Judah.—2 Chron. 21:5-20. Sat.—Grandson of Omri.—2 Chron. 22:1-12. Su.—Destruction of Ahab.—2 Kings 9:1-10.

OMRI AND AHAB LEAD ISRAEL INTO GREATER SIN.—1 Kings 16: 15-33. Print 16: 23-33.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 25, 30)

SUPT.—23 In the thirty and first year of A'sa king of Ju'dah began Om'ri to reign over Is'ra-el, twelve years: six years reigned he in Tir'zah.

School.—24 And he bought the hill Sa-mar'i-a of She'mer for two talents of silver, and built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, after the name of She'mer, owner of the hill, Sa-mar'i-a.

25 But Om'ri wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all that were before him.

26 For he walked in all the way of Jer-o-bo'am the son of Ne'bat, and in his sin wherewith he made Is'ra-el to sin, to provoke the Lord God of Is'ra-el to anger with their vanities.

27 Now the rest of the acts of Om'ri which he did, and his might that he shewed, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Is'ra-el?

28 So Om'ri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Sa-mar'i-a: and A'hab his son reigned in his stead.

29 And in the thirty and eighth year of A'sa king of Ju'dah began A'hab the son of Om'ri to reign over Is'ra-el: and A'hab the son of Om'ri reigned over Is'ra-el in Sa-mar'i-a twenty and two years.

30 And A'hab the son of Om'ri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him.

31 And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jer-o-bo'am the son of Ne'bat, that he took to wife Jez'e-bel the daughter of Eth-ba'al king of the Zi-do'ni-ans, and went and served Ba'al, and worshipped him.

32 And he reared up an altar for Ba'al in the house of Ba'al, which he had built in Sa-mar'i-a.

33 And A'hab made a grove; and A'hab did more to provoke the Lord God of Is'ra-el to anger than all the kings of Is'ra-el that were before him.

*AMERICAN REVISION

23 In the thirty and first year of Asa king of Judah began Omri to reign over Israel, and reigned twelve years: six years reigned he in Tirzah. 24 And he bought the hill Samaria of Shemer for two talents of silver; and he built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, after the name of Shemer, the owner of the hill, Samaria. 25 And Omri did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and dealt wickedly above all that were before him. 26 For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sins wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke Jehovah, the God of Israel, to anger with their vanities. 27 Now the rest of the acts of Omri which he did, and his might that he showed, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 28 So Omri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria; and Ahab his son reigned in his stead.

29 And in the thirty and eighth year of Asa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel; and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty and two years. 30 And Ahab the son of Omri did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah above all that were before him. 31 And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. 32 And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. 33 And Ahab made the Asherah; and Ahab did yet more to provoke Jehovah, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people. Prov. 14:34.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—The way of the wicked is downward.

TOPIC.—Deepening shadows in Israel.

OUTLINE.—I. Zimri's conspiracy. II. Omri's wicked reign. III. Ahab's more wicked reign.

TIME.—Zimri's conspiracy and Omri's accession, B. C. 929; Ahab's accession, B. C. 918.

PLACES.—Tirzah and Samaria, successively capitals of Israel.

READ.—1 Kings 21, 22.

INTRODUCTION.—Passing again to the history of Israel, the northern kingdom, we find that Baasha had been on the throne eleven years at the time of the last lesson. His record is, "And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin." At his death after reigning twenty-four years he was succeeded by his son Elah, whose record is like that of his father (1 Kings 16:13). Elah was intemperate and in one of his drunken debauches he was slain by a conspirator. With the death of Elah ended the second line of the kings of Israel. It is a noticeable fact that there were two kings in each of the first two lines. Jeroboam reigned twenty-two years and his son Nadab followed in a reign of two years, when the latter was slain by the conspirator Baasha, and the throne was occupied by another line of kings. Baasha held the throne twenty-four years, and at his death his son Elah succeeded

him. At the end of two years Elah was slain and the throne passed from his family. While the natural line of Jeroboam was of short duration, his moral line continued in an unbroken succession, for all the kings who followed him walked in his evil ways. Some were not as bad as others yet all were bad, and some so bad that one could scarcely imagine them worse.

COMMENTARY.—I. ZIMRI'S CONSPIRACY (VS. 15-20). Baasha had conspired against Nadab, had slain him and seized the throne, so Elah the son of Baasha was the victim of a conspiracy and his kingdom was wrested from him by Zimri. Elah's servant, Zimri, was an officer in the army and was captain over a half of the chariots. In order to make himself secure in the kingdom he slew all of the family of Elah that there might be none to dispute his right. His reign was short, only seven days. The army was waging a campaign against the Philistines and were besieging Gibbethon. As soon as the army learned of Zimri's act they made their commander, Omri, king, withdrew from Gibbethon and attacked Zimri in the palace at Tirzah. Rather than fall into the hands of Omri, Zimri set fire to the palace when he saw that he could hold out no longer and perished in the flames. His punishment was speedy and retributive. Even though his reign was of but seven days' duration, the record is made that he walked "in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, to make Israel to sin."

II. OMRI'S WICKED REIGN (vs. 21-28).

21, 22. Omri did not find his way the most easy. While the army was supporting him as king, the people brought forward Tibni, of whom we know but little, to make him king. "Tibni died, and Omri reigned." "The record is so brief as to leave it doubtful whether he died naturally or by violence."

—Whedon. 23. in the thirty and first year ... began Omri—Zimri reigned in the twenty-ninth year of Asa king of Judah, at which time Omri was made king by his army. The struggle between Omri and Tibni for the sole possession of the throne continued for four years, when Omri prevailed, hence "in the thirty and first year of Asa" he began to reign as undisputed king. twelve years—This includes the four years that Tibni laid claim to the throne. six years. ... in Tirzah—Jeroboam fired his capital at Shechem, but it was later transferred a few miles to Tirzah which means "delight."

24. the hill Samaria—The palace of Tirzah being in ruins, Omri, in selecting the site of his royal residence, was naturally influenced by considerations both of pleasure and advantage. In the center of a wide amphitheater of mountains, about six miles from Shechem, rises an oblong hill with steep, yet accessible sides, and a long, flat top extending east and west, and rising five hundred or six hundred feet above the valley. What Omri probably built as a mere palatial residence, became the capital of the kingdom instead of Shechem. The choice of Omri was admirable in selecting a position which combined strength, beauty and fertility.—Stanley. Shemer—The Hebrew form is Shomer, from whence the hill was called Shomeron, or Samaria. two talents of silver—A little less than \$4,000.00. This amount would purchase ten times as much then as it would now.

25. wrought evil—"Did that which was evil."—R. V. worse than all that were before him—He went farther than they had gone in establishing iniquity by law, and forcing his subjects to comply with him in it; for we read in Micah 6:16 of the "statutes of Omri," the keeping of which made Israel a desolation.—H-nry. We can not doubt that these statutes of Omri were measures adopted for more completely isolating the people from the house of the Lord at Jerusalem and of perpetuating—perhaps increasing—their idolatrous practices.—Kitto. This is a striking illustration of the truth that sin is cumulative. One sin leads to another. One king seemed to bequeath to his successor the sum total of the sins of which he was guilty. 26. he walked in all the way of Jeroboam—Asa in Judah forsook the evil ways of his predecessors, but not so with Omri. It was his own choice to do evil. provoke the Lord God ... to anger—This is not the anger of passion, but of indignation against sin. vanities—This word is often employed in the Old Testament of false gods, and the worship paid to them. The idea is that such a deity is nothing, and such prayers can have no result.—Cambridge Bible. In the New Testament also the same sentiment prevails. Paul says, "We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one" (1 Cor. 8:4).

27. the rest of the acts of Omri—This implies that but a few events of his twelve years' reign are here recorded. Farrar says that he founded the most conspicuous house of Israel, inasmuch that the Assyrians knew the northern kingdom as "the house of Omri." book of the chronicles—The historical records of the kingdom and not the books called Chronicles in the Bible. The records are now lost. 28. slept with his fathers—The expression ordinarily used to record the death of a king,

and is generally followed by a statement as to the place of his burial.

III. AHAB'S MORE WICKED REIGN (vs. 29-33).

29. the thirty and eighth year of Asa—Asa reigned three years after this. Jeroboam died the year before Asa began to reign, and during his reign Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri and Omri had died. began Ahab—From a moral standpoint conditions were by no means hopeful. The nation was plunging into sin as rapidly as the years were passing. The record of Ahab's reign is full, owing no doubt to the prominence of the prophet Elijah during that time. In Samaria—Samaria had become the permanent capital of the northern kingdom. 30. did evil ... above all that were before him—He had wicked examples only before him. The morals of the people were bad. The religious system was corrupt. As Omri had exceeded all his predecessors in wickedness, so Ahab exceeded even him. Those who were before him had made a pretense of worshiping God under the symbol of the calf, but he introduced heathen idols and the worship of them.

31. a light thing—Ahab's wickedness was so much greater than that of Jeroboam that in a comparison between them that of Jeroboam might be considered "a light thing." With Ahab "it was nothing to break the second commandment by image-worship; he would set aside the first also by introducing other gods; his little finger should fall heavier upon God's ordinances than Jeroboam's loins."—Henry. Jezebel—She appeared almost the embodiment of evil. She was a Canaanite and her father, Ethbaal, was a priest of the corrupt religion of the Zidonians. He had slain his own brother and usurped the throne. Jezebel inherited his cruelty and idolatrous tendencies. This wicked, heathen wife led Ahab much farther into sin than he would have gone of his own accord, yet he was fully responsible, for he had done wrong in forming such an alliance. Ahab introduced this purely heathen worship, but Jeroboam had prepared the way for it by setting up the golden calves.

32. reared ... altar, etc.—He built a temple and in it erected an altar where sacrifice might be offered to Baal. "Splendid shrines were built, especially one of vast size in the capital, and the rites and ceremonies of the new cult were exhibited on a grand scale, with sensuous accompaniments of all kinds,—music, statuary, procession of robed priests, victims, incense, bands of fanatics worked up to frenzy by religious excitement, and the like. Astarte's emblems were erected, and license was given, under cover of her worship, to the grossest licentious excesses."—Rawlinson. 33. made a grove—"Made the Asherah"—R. V. Ahab erected an image representing Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians, as Baal represented the male god, and the worship of these was most degrading. did more—His opportunity for doing good was great, but through evil influences he went so far as to surpass all his predecessors in wickedness. Ahab must ever stand as a synonym of evil in high places. No amount of temporal success could offset the volume of sin of which he was guilty.

QUESTIONS.—What were the names of the kings of Israel between Jeroboam and Omri? How long did each rule? What were their characters? Who ruled in Judah at this time? How did Omri obtain the throne? Who contested the kingdom with him for four years? How long did Omri reign? What was his character? What hill did he purchase for a new capital? From whom? What price did he pay? What was the character of Ahab? How long and when did he reign? What can you say of Jezebel? What did Ahab build in Samaria?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. Review Asa's character and acts as presented in the last lesson. 2. Events in the kingdom of Israel from Jeroboam's time. Nadab, Baasha, Elah. 3. The fifty years from Jeroboam's taking the throne of Israel to Omri's full possession of it shows a succession of unscrupulous kings. 4. Very different conditions in Judah. 5. The influence of religion upon national and individual life.

II. THEME.—Increasing wickedness in Israel.

III. ZIMRI.—1. His ancestry is unknown. 2. His office and ambition for power. 3. Elah's drunkenness gave him his opportunity to slay the king and usurp the throne. 4. His short-lived triumph. 5. His disgraceful end. 6. The destructiveness of sinful ambition.

IV. OMRI.—1. He was a man of large ability and was a great military man. 2. The opportunity that came to him. He could have turned the moral tide of the nation if he had chosen to do so. 3. The struggle with Tibni. 4. The purchase of Samaria. 5. His record. Worse than all before him. Worse than Jeroboam who introduced idolatry; worse than Baasha who slew Nadab the king; worse than the debauched Elah; worse than the assassin and suicide, Zimri. An awful record. 6. His heritage to his son Ahab.

V. AHAB.—1. Zimri was bad, Omri was worse and Ahab was worst. 2. Not simply bad of his own accord but easily influenced. A weak man. 3. The evil of his alliance with the heathen Jezebel. 4. Jezebel's character. Cruel, deceptive (1 Kings 21: 1-16). 5. The establishment of heathen worship. 6. Jeroboam had erected golden calves as symbols of the true God, but Ahab built a house for Baal and set up an altar to him, and made a shrine for Asherah, thus establishing the most impure and degrading worship imaginable.

VI. SIN IS DEBASING.—1. Sin cherished is like a viper in the bo-om. It is likely to inflict its fatal sting at any time. 2. The beginnings of sin are like the tiny stream trickling through the embankment. 3. One who begins a sinful course does not consider what the end is to be. 4. Witness the vast army of moral, mental and physical wrecks in the world to-day. 5. Sin in the leaders of the nation affects the morals of the people for evil. "Sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14: 34).

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Deepening shadows in Israel.

I. Increased transgression in Israel.

II. Idol worship established by Ahab.


I. Increased transgression in Israel. Zimri, Tibni and Omri, were all striving for the crown. At variance as the kings of Israel were with each other, hating and killing each other, they never thought of returning to "the house of David" or to the true worship of Jehovah. They maintained the worship which Jeroboam had instituted, regarding it as the means by which they could maintain their own kingdom and their dominion over Judah, forgetting that the throne which has been obtained by trickery, deceit, falsehood and bloodshed has no stability, and that men who forsake God are out of the way of rest and security. The monarchy in Israel arose by means of rebellion and forcible separation from the house of David, and therefore lacked the support of divine law. Their revolt proved to be mainly their own loss. The kingdom became the football of human ambition and caprice so that one insurrection followed another. No di-

vine approval or blessing could rest upon such a kingdom. One king exceeded another in wickedness and revolt against the living God. Making light of what they deemed lesser sins led the way to greater ones. The slavery of sin is ever increasing. Idolatry is the grossest and most direct insult to the living God and murder is the grossest offense against man. The crown of Israel was deeply stained with the blood of murder. Suicide also disgraced those violent times. Jeroboam had made Israel to sin by temptation, example and allurements, but Omri by compulsion. He passed unawed through the midst of the most terrible judgments and the most marked fulfillments of God's threatenings and still continued to do worse than former kings. Conspirators and rebels profess to overthrow tyranny and to cast off its yoke, but when they obtain power and sovereignty, they are themselves the most violent and cruel. Omri was more profane and superstitious and a greater persecutor than either the houses of Jeroboam or Baasha. He went farther in establishing iniquity by a law and enforcing his subjects to comply. We read of his statutes, the keeping of which made Israel a desolation (Mic. 6: 16). The temple being placed in Samaria, his capital seemed to vie with the temple of the Lord in the capital of Judah.

II. Idol worship established by Ahab. Without any political inducement Ahab set up greater idolatries than those of Jeroboam. He exceeded all his predecessors in wickedness. His marriage was an act of policy in which religious considerations went for naught. Still his marriage was the cause of his ruin. His foolish choice resulted in lasting dishonor. Such a marriage was unprecedented in the kingdom of Israel and was the more fatal because of the character of the queen. She was reckless, licentious, fanatical and cruel with a temper as vindictive as her will was resolute. It would seem that Ahab's alliance with Jezebel was negotiated by Omri for it took place in his reign. Perhaps neither Omri nor Ahab grasped all the consequences of such a union, but such a thing was contrary to the very essence of the religion of Israel. Ahab had the divine law which distinctly forbade union with the Canaanites (Exod. 34: 16). The fate of Ahab and his house was the most disastrous of all the kings of Israel. The wicked Jezebel stands out on the page of sacred history as the first supporter of religious persecution. Not content with insulting the religion of the nation by her idolatrous establishments, she made an attempt to crush the worship of Jehovah altogether. Insult and injury marked her career. If she had respect for her unstable husband she surely exhibited no respect for his honor as king or his religion among his subjects. If she were stronger than he it was to make him to sin more than all the kings who preceded him. Companionship influences character, and Ahab through Jezebel yielded to the worship of Baal and made it a state religion.

T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

<p>FORSAKING GOD - ISRAEL GOES FROM BAD TO WORSE.</p> <p>BEWARE OF UNHOLY ALLIANCES.</p> <p>THEY LEAD TO RUIN.</p>		<p>DO YOU WANT YOUR NAME LINKED WITH SUCH NAMES AS JEROBOAM, OMRI, AHAB, JEZEBEL? OR WITH THE PURE AND THE GOOD?</p>
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Practical Applications

"In the thirty and first year of Asa" (v. 23). Asa, son and successor of Abijah on the throne of Judah, was inclined in the first part of his reign to do away with the idolatries and abuses which had been practised by his fathers. Later he forsook God and failed to fulfil the bright promises the earlier years had given. It was in the latter part of his reign that Omri, who was an officer in the army of Israel, was suddenly declared king of Israel. His reign of twelve years was a most disgraceful one.

"He walked in all the way of Jeroboam" (v. 26). The leading object of Jeroboam's policy was to widen the breach between the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel. To this end he scrupled not to sacrifice the most sacred and inviolable interests and obligations of the covenant people, by forbidding his subjects to resort to the one temple and altar of Jehovah at Jerusalem, and by establishing shrines at Bethel and Dan—the extremities of his kingdom—where "golden calves" were set up as symbols of Jehovah. Hence the "sins of Jeroboam which he sinned, and which he made Israel to sin" (1 Kings 15: 30), became a standing phrase in describing the iniquity from which no king of Israel departed. Learn to set a good example. You know not how many are looking up to you and following your example. A gentleman engaged in a manufacturing business took frequent journeys, and in order to hasten his return to his family often started on Sunday evening. One Sunday, after he had gone, his little boy said to his mother, "How is it that papa, who is such a good man, travels on Sunday?" "Because he has so much to do." "Mamma," asked the little fellow, "does God allow us to break his commandments when it seems necessary?" On his return the mother related the boy's remark. "Tell him," was the father's noble answer, "I stand corrected. I trust I shall never again do what may prove a stumbling-block to our children. They shall never have it to say that their father led them astray."

"Ahab the son of Omri reigned" (v. 29). We often think of Ahab as being an insignificant person domineered over by his wife, but to quote from a writer we get a different idea, though not a very exalted one: "This monarch was by no means the weakling he is commonly supposed to have been. He was brave and successful on the field of battle. Once and again he vanquished the army of the proud Benhadad, and at last he met his death valiantly, though in disguise, at Ramoth-gilead."

"He took to wife Jezebel..." and went and served Baal" (v. 31). In Jezebel, his wife, we vainly look for one womanly relenting, one gentle weakness, to soften the hard lines of more than masculine firmness. As Solomon's heathen wives turned his heart after strange gods (1 Kings 11: 4), so Ahab's marriage with this woman leads him into Baal-worship. The believer in Jesus Christ and worshiper of the true God will hate sin as God hates it, and avoid deliberately rushing into temptation. Many a young man can trace his ruin to the hour when he united in marriage with a vain, frivolous, unchristian girl. Heed the Bible injunction, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6: 14).

"Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God" (v. 33). "The anger of the Lord is not a pettish feeling of displeasure, an exhibition of temper or any sudden impulse. It is the indignation of the divine nature against wrong, and God loves righteousness and hates iniquity." He who sins deliberately defies God deliberately. A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—Sin drags the sinner downward.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

ZIMRI WAS BAD

OMRI WAS WORSE

AHAB WAS THE WORST

IDOLATRY

MURDER

A starting point. The lesson to-day presents a dark picture indeed. There is no ray of light in it, and in order to brighten it a little it would be well to review the good reign of Asa. This will furnish material for the truth that goodness is desirable and sin is contemptible. To make the subject impressive you could use the blackboard or a tablet and at the head of one column write Asa's name, and at the head of another write the names of Zimri, Omri and Ahab. Under Asa's name write the good things which he did as given in the last lesson, and as you proceed with the lesson of the day write in the other column the evil things that the kings of Israel did. In all this lesson keep the thought prominent that the nature of sin is to grow and spread. Use the illustration of the snowball that children roll until it becomes so large that they can not move it any further. The story is told of the camel that wanted to put just his nose into the tent, and when permission was given, thrust in his whole head; later his whole body was inside, and the owner of the tent crowded out. The illustration also of the small leak in the embankment which increased in size until a destructive flood was let loose, would be profitable. Sin should be stopped at its very beginning. Jesus is waiting to forgive sins and to make us all good.

Zimri was bad. Notice that he was a strong man in the service of the king, and was trusted with the charge of the chariots. He desired more power. He wished to be king. Make a point upon Elah's drunkenness. It was not only wicked in itself but it gave Zimri his chance to kill him. Show how base it was for Zimri to conspire against Elah, and how wicked it was for him to slay him. Then notice the short time of Zimri's reign and his fate. He gained nothing after all. Sin is deceptive.

Omri was worse. Omri had great ability and a great opportunity, but he was more wicked than all the kings before him. Recall the evil doings of Jeroboam, Baasha, Elah and Zimri and read the twenty-fifth verse. He did evil because his heart was wicked. Sin is like an avalanche. When once started it becomes more destructive as it advances. It is just a slight motion in the beginning.

Ahab was the worst yet. There are two things especially about Ahab that mark him down as a terribly wicked man. First, he formed very wicked associations. He married the wicked Jezebel, the daughter of a heathen priest. Impress the lesson of the evils of bad companionships. Ahab was worse than he would have been but for Jezebel. Second, Ahab not only introduced vile heathen worship but tried to stamp out the worship of the true God. He desired to put away Jehovah through whom his nation had an existence. That person or that nation that sets God aside is left helpless.

LESSON V

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Jan. 23.—Jehoshaphat's reign.—2 Chron. 17: 1-19. Tu.—Prophecy of Zedekiah.—1 Kings 22: 1-12. Wed.—Prophecy of Micaiah.—1 Kings 22: 13-28. Th.—Prophecy fulfilled.—1 Kings 22: 29-40. Fr.—Rebuke by Jehu.—2 Chron. 19: 1-11. Sat.—Victory.—2 Chron. 20: 1-30. Su.—A godly king.—1 Kings 22: 41-50.

JEHOSHAPHAT'S GOOD REIGN IN JUDAH.—2 Chron. 17: 1-13.**Print 17: 1-6, 9-13.****AUTHORIZED VERSION***(Memory Verses 3, 4)*

SUPT.—1 And Je-hosh'a-phat his son reigned in his stead, and strengthened himself against Is'ra-el.

School.—2 And he placed forces in all the fenced cities of Ju'dah, and set garrisons in the land of Ju'dah, and in the cities of E'phra-im, which A'sa his father had taken.

3 And the Lord was with Je-hosh'a-phat, because he walked in the first ways of his father Da'vid, and sought not unto Ba'a'im;

4 But sought to the Lord God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Is'ra-el.

5 Therefore the Lord established the kingdom in his hand; and all Ju'dah brought to Je-hosh'a-phat presents; and he had riches and honour in abundance.

6 And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord: moreover he took away the high places and groves out of Ju'dah.

9 And they taught in Ju'dah, and had the book of the law of the Lord with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Ju'dah, and taught the people.

10 And the fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Ju'dah, so that they made no war against Je-hosh'a-phat.

11 Also some of the Philis-tines brought Je-hosh'a-phat presents, and tribute silver; and the A-ra'bi-ans brought him flocks, seven thousand and seven hundred rams, and seven thousand and seven hundred he goats.

12 And Je-hosh'a-phat waxed great exceedingly; and he built in Ju'dah castles, and cities of store.

13 And he had much business in the cities of Ju'dah: and the men of war, mighty men of valour, were in Je-ru'sa-lem.

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***AMERICAN REVISION**

1 And Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead, and strengthened himself against Is'ra-el. 2 And he placed forces in all the fortified cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim, which Asa his father had taken. 3 And Jehovah was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto the Baalim. 4 But sought to the God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Is'ra-el. 5 Therefore Jehovah established the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat tribute; and he had riches and honor in abundance. 6 And his heart was lifted up in the ways of Jehovah; and furthermore he took away the high places and the Asherim out of Judah.

9 And they taught in Judah, having the book of the law of Jehovah with them; and they went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught among the people.

10 And the fear of Jehovah fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat. 11 And some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and silver for tribute; the Arabians also brought him flocks, seven thousand and seven hundred rams, and seven thousand and seven hundred he-goats. 12 And Jehoshaphat waxed great exceedingly; and he built in Judah castles and cities of store. 13 And he had many works in the cities of Judah; and men of war, mighty men of valor, in Jerusalem.

SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? **School.**—Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Matt. 6: 33.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—There is great encouragement in following the Lord fully.

TOPIC.—The conditions of national prosperity.

OUTLINE.—I. An active reformer. II. Instructing the people in the law. III. An honored and prosperous kingdom.

TIME.—Jehoshaphat's reign, B. C. 914-889.

PLACE.—The kingdom of Judah.

PARALLEL ACCOUNT.—1 Kings 22: 41-50.

READ.—2 Chron. 17-20.

INTRODUCTION.—The events studied two weeks ago occurred in the fifteenth year of Asa's reign in Judah. During the remaining twenty-six years during which he occupied the throne, three things are worthy of notice. 1. He deposed his mother, Maachah, from being queen because of her idolatry, and destroyed the idol which she had made. 2. He placed in the temple the precious things which his father and he in their devotion and prosperity had dedicated to God. 3. He unwisely hired Benhadad, the king of Syria, to help him against Baasha, the king of Israel, giving him silver and gold from the house of the Lord. Asa was rebuked by Hanani the prophet for this act, in that he had relied upon the king of Syria rather than upon God. Asa's reign together with that of Jehoshaphat stands out with luster in the annals of the kingdom of Judah. This period followed the wicked reigns of Rehoboam and Abijah and was followed by the administration of Jehoram, who "walked in the way of the kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab" (2 Chron. 21: 6). Jehoshaphat ascended the throne of Judah in the fourth year

of Ahab, king of Israel, and reigned during the remaining eighteen years of Ahab, during two years of Ahaziah and five of Jehoram of Israel, twenty-five years in all. While Judah was enjoying a high degree of moral and temporal prosperity, Israel was being ruled by one of the most wicked kings of her history. It is refreshing to turn from the dark picture of Israel's wickedness to this bright period of Judah's devotion and prosperity, and receive the inspiring lessons which it teaches.

COMMENTARY.—I. AN ACTIVE REFORMER (vs. 1-6). 1. **his son**—Jehoshaphat was Asa's son, and began to reign at the age of thirty-five. His father had bequeathed to him a kingdom that was prosperous and comparatively free from idolatry. **strengthened himself against Israel**—The two nations continued hostile, and Jehoshaphat purposed to retain all that justly belonged to his kingdom. His course shows the active man. 2. **fenced cities**—He maintained armed men in the fortified cities, especially along the frontier of the kingdom of Israel, to guard against sudden invasions from that kingdom. **garrisons... in the cities of Ephraim**—Jehoshaphat was determined to retain his hold upon what had been acquired by his father and passed down to him. Here is a spiritual lesson for us. We retain the Christian experience and grace which God gives us only by watchfulness, activity and faith. The king did not sit down in careless security. "If a man wants to make progress he must first see to it that he holds what he already has. A young man who neglects the property his father has left him can hardly succeed in business

for himself. He who fails in attention to old friends will be of little value to new ones. There is no hope of scholarship to a student who refuses to make available the researches of scholars who have gone before him. When you hear a man sneering at the faith and doctrines of his fathers, be sure that his own faith and doctrines will be of little value to his children. If he can not hold the best things his fathers left him he will not be likely to leave anything worth holding to them that come after him."

—H. C. Trumbull.

3. the Lord was with Jehoshaphat—He was with Jehoshaphat as he was with Asa his father, because he was with the Lord. See 2 Chron. 15:1, 2. The fact that the Lord is with one is that the person is strengthened in righteousness, is encouraged and blessed. The testimony of the devout, victorious Christian is, "The Lord is with me." The great reformers and the mighty men of God in all ages have succeeded in the work to which they have been called because God was with them. **in the first ways of his father David**—David was earnest, devoted, strong and true to God in the first part of his life, but fell into deep sin, of which he soon repented. Jehoshaphat followed the good ways of David. Since the word "David" is not in the Septuagint, some have thought that the first ways of Asa were intended, the word having crept into the text as an interpolation, but it is more likely that the text as we have it here is correct. **sought not unto Baalim**—The tendency in Israel was strong toward Baal-worship and had its influence upon the kingdom of Judah. This tendency Jehoshaphat steadfastly resisted. Baalim is the plural of Baal and indicates that there were various images of Baal and varying forms under which he was worshiped. This worship was unqualifiedly debasing.

4. sought to the God of his father (R V.)—The true God, walked in his commandments—He observed not only the Ten Commandments but all the law, moral and ceremonial, that God had promulgated. He who seeks the Lord has high regard for his will as expressed in his law. **not after the doings of Israel**—The northern kingdom had broken away from the pure worship of God, and in great part from his worship through symbols, and had gone almost hopelessly into idolatry. Multitudes of people attempt to excuse themselves for wrong-doing because others do wrong. Jehoshaphat withstood the tide of evil and left to the world a grand example of devotion and fidelity. The world admires brilliancy of intellect and physical courage, but it admires much more moral courage and unflinching devotion to the cause of righteousness. The characters in scripture that stand out with luster are those that exhibit faithfulness to truth even unto death.

5. therefore—God has regard to the choices and acts of men. There was a reason why God established "the kingdom in his hand." It was because he walked in the good ways of David, shunned idolatry, sought the Lord and kept his commandments. **all Judah brought.... presents**—In addition to the regular taxes. The people recognized and appreciated the godly character of their sovereign. **riches and honour**—Jehoshaphat sought, not riches and honor, but God himself and in finding him he obtained "riches and honour in abundance." **6. his heart was lifted up**—His heart was not lifted up with pride but he was encouraged and strengthened in the Lord. His attitude toward the Lord and his law had resulted in his being prepared for the great work that lay before him. **took away the high places and groves**—Asa's work had been toward this same end,

but it had not been wholly accomplished (2 Chron. 15:17), and the strong disposition of the people toward idolatry had doubtless resulted in the erection of other shrines. The high places and "the Asherim" stood for idolatrous worship. Because they were removed once would not answer for all time. Constant watchfulness must be exercised to keep out the evil.

II. INSTRUCTING THE PEOPLE IN THE LAW (vs. 7-9).
7, 8. Two years had been spent in carrying out the reforms undertaken and in organizing the kingdom to maintain its proper standing before the Lord. We know nothing of the five princes, the nine Levites and the two priests except what is given in this connection. The princes had the oversight and care of the instruction, but the actual work of teaching the people was done by the Levites and priests. Jehoshaphat "did well to put down idolatry, but he was wise enough to know that unless the people were instructed, they would soon apostatize again."—Whedon. **9. book of the law**—This was the Pentateuch. "Copies of the whole law were no doubt scarce, and therefore Jehoshaphat's commission took care to carry a copy with them."—Rawlinson. **throughout all the cities**—It was a thorough campaign of instruction. The fathers had largely failed in their duty as prescribed in Deut. 6:7, and because of the scarcity of the written law it was necessary to inaugurate this plan of missionary instruction. Here is authority for carrying the gospel message to the people. On mission fields a very important part of the work is to give the natives instruction in the word of God, and to teach them to read it for themselves.

III. AN HONORED AND PROSPEROUS KINGDOM (vs. 10-13).
10. the fear of the Lord, etc.—This is an illustration of the truth of the words in Prov. 14:34, "Righteousness exalteth a nation." As the surrounding nations saw Judah in earnest to put away all evil, and the attendant prosperity, they were filled with a wholesome fear of this favored nation. The ungodly recognize the power of those who are in full harmony with God. **11. brought.... presents**—The Philistines and Arabians, instead of making war, placed themselves voluntarily under tribute to Jehoshaphat that they might avoid war. The Philistines brought silver which represented their wealth, and the Arabians brought sheep and goats, for their wealth consisted in their flocks.

12. waxed great exceedingly—This is a strong expression. Jehoshaphat's moral greatness prepared the way for him to become great in honor and riches. **castles**—Places of defense. In times of peace he made preparations to maintain peace. **cities of store**—Storehouses were provided for the abundance that flowed into this divinely favored nation. **13. much business**—The expression indicates the great commercial activity existing during this period of prosperity. **men of war**—Jehoshaphat did not neglect the military department of the government. From the verses following the lesson we learn the vastness of the armies.

QUESTIONS.—Who was king in Israel when Jehoshaphat began to reign in Judah? Who was Jehoshaphat's father? His grandfather? What was the first act of Jehoshaphat after becoming king? What is said of his moral character? Describe the blessings that came to him. What reforms did he accomplish? Describe his campaign of instruction. What was the effect of Jehoshaphat's good reign upon Judah? What was the effect upon the nations around about? What shows the prosperity that came to the nation? What was the king's purpose in taking the course he did? What other course was open to him and with what prospects?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. We turn again to the study of Judah, leaving the consideration of two of the most wicked kings of history to study one of the most pious. 2. Note the chronology. 3. Note the names and characters of the kings of Judah thus far studied. 4. The extent of the kingdom of Judah. 5. The prosperity is not accidental.

II. THEME.—Walking in the ways of God.

III. THE REFORMER.—1. Study the condition of Judah at the time of Asa's death. 2. The tendency of men and nations to forget and forsake God. 3. The fact that Jehoshaphat strengthened himself against Israel shows the hostility of that nation. 4. The king walked in the good way. 5. He sought God. 6. He obeyed the commandments of God. 7. He shunned the evils of Israel. 8. He removed the remains of idolatry. 9. He enjoyed the divine presence and was encouraged.

IV. THE TEACHER.—1. The command of God regarding the teaching of the law (Deut. 6: 7). 2. The condition of Judah as to the knowledge of the law. 3. Three classes of men engaged in the work of instructing the people. 4. The thoroughness of the mission. 5. The scarcity of copies of the law. 6. The purpose in teaching the people the law. 7. Comparison between this event and the modern Sunday-school.

V. THE HONORED KING OF A PROSPEROUS NATION.—1. The distinctive aim of Jehoshaphat's life was to be right himself and promote righteousness in his kingdom. 2. He received honor and riches. Compare this with the request that Solomon made (1 Kings 3: 5-14). 3. The results of Jehoshaphat's pious efforts. (1) He was blessed and encouraged himself. (2) Judah was well-disposed toward him. (3) The surrounding nations were peaceable toward Judah. (4) The outside nations paid tribute of their own accord. (5) Jehoshaphat became a powerful king. (6) There was great commercial prosperity. (7) A large army became possible. 4. An illustrious example of the blessings that flow from righteousness.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—The conditions of national prosperity.

I. Secure protection against enemies.

II. Expulsion of internal foes.

III. The building up of true patriotism.

I. Secure protection against enemies. King Asa had begun a good work in Judah. Jehoshaphat caught up the plan where his father left it, believing that a strong defense is the surest means of peace to a nation or an individual when surrounded by enemies. The power of example is shown in the life of Jehoshaphat. He made a good beginning by following in the good ways of his ancestors. He recognized God, sought his guidance and lived for his glory. He turned his intellect, affection and will toward God. He was a man of worth and strength of character. He possessed prudence and piety. His policy as a statesman was wise, protective and patriotic. He was bold and resolute in the work of God. His first effort was the strengthening of the outposts of his kingdom. This done he could safely turn his attention to the real work of strengthening his people.

II. Expulsion of internal foes. Jehoshaphat stood out against the evil spirit of his times. He established reforms through religion and law. He united civil and religious power in securing national

reform. He began by setting an example of faithfulness to Jehovah. He was distinguished for true piety in his every-day life, in his private devotions and in his obedience to God. The inspiration of his heart came from the consciousness of his obedience to God. Religion pervaded his life. Activity pervaded his religion and cheerfulness pervaded his activity. He won the love and confidence of his people and secured their cooperation. He was wise in his management. His wisdom, goodness and usefulness are clearly manifest in his course of action among his people, in his great reformatory movements. He put down idolatrous worship and made provisions for instructing the people in the law of the Lord. He removed temptation and provided for his people the highest and best means for their good. He took away the teachers of lies and sent forth teachers of truth to instruct the people in their duty. He endeavored thus to take away the inclination for evil as well as the opportunity for the indulgence of corrupt worship. He prepared the way for national reform. He led the way for his people to the true worship of Jehovah. He loved God more than Baal and sought to bring all Judah to the same joy he felt in his life. In taking from them an evil thing he presented to them a better way. The destruction of evil propensities prepared their hearts for holy devotion to God, and devotion meant as much to the godly life then as it does now.

III. The building up of true patriotism. Jehoshaphat's reign is a picture of a government richly blessed of God. He had devout officers and devoted subjects and his own piety was rewarded with freedom from war. He was not slothful in business but fervent in spirit in his service for the Lord. His prosperity included the safety of his kingdom, the love and confidence of his people, great honor from abroad and abundant wealth. Wherever true religion prospers the nation prospers and is ever a great nation, peaceful and united. Build up men and the nation is built up. "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Psa. 19: 8). The reign of Jehoshaphat was one of the best and most prosperous in all Judah's history. It gives an insight into the true path to prosperity. "Happy is that people, whose God is the Lord." Jehoshaphat's one failure recorded in chapter eighteen is a warning against a danger common to all. That there is no time when God's people are safe without his counsel, or strong without his power, the history of his chosen people proves. That Satan follows closely with his subtle devices upon the most triumphant and devoted, we are sure. Safety and success lie only in beginning and ending all our ways under divine direction. Best citizens, best rulers are those who are first true to God's laws and then seek to pattern all earthly government upon the principles of righteousness.

T. E. A.

Blackboard Exercise

ISRAEL DEPARTING FROM GOD		JEHOSHAPHAT ACTED WISELY.
JUDAH DRAWING NEARER TO GOD.		HE SOUGHT GOD.
THEIR FUTURE MAY BE EASILY FORESEEN.		TAUGHT THE PEOPLE, OBEYED THE LAW, WAS DILIGENT IN BUSINESS, WAS PROSPERED.

Practical Applications

The presence of the Lord. "The Lord was with Jehoshaphat" (v. 8). "The Lord established the kingdom in his hand" (v. 5). Utter abandonment to him whose instruments we are, joyful consciousness of the spiritual presence of Immanuel, God with us, faith in his own assurance that we are workers together with him, these make labor light and effort effectual. Captain Richardson, of the Sailor's Home, noticed one morning a brother seaman come from his room and go out. Presently the man returned, and remaining some time, came out with a look on his face which led the captain to inquire why he had returned. The answer was, "After I got out I found Jesus was not with me. I could not go without Jesus, so I went back to my closet to find him. Now he is with me and I can go." Without Jesus the way is rough, cold, stormy, perilous. Without Jesus the heart is hard, bitter, rebellious, restless. With Jesus the way is smooth, warm, pleasant, safe. With Jesus the heart is tender, loving, thoughtful, restful. Oh, take Jesus with you everywhere!

The prospered life. "Jehoshaphat....had riches and honour in abundance" (v. 5). The promise to the righteous man is, "Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psa. 1:3). Writing concerning money, Paul says, "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8). Lack of real prosperity springs from lack of faith. A gentleman sitting with guests one day at his dinner-table said to his wife, "Let us try an experiment." Then he called to his dog, "Peter, come here." Slowly the animal obeyed. Then the master, to his wife's astonishment, took the platter containing the leg of roast mutton and put it on the floor in front of Peter. The dog looked first at the meat, then at his master. Then he walked around the platter and looked up into the faces of the guests. What did it mean? Scraps and leavings were all he had a right to expect. Finally he gave one longing look at the meat, dropped his tail between his legs and disconsolately sneaked out of the room, and missed the generous slice that would surely have been given him had he dared to believe his master. "There," said Mr. Harris, "Peter is just as inconsistent as most Christians." Yea, verily, when our Father drops down before us some exceeding great and precious promise (2 Pet. 1:4), such as, "I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" (3 John 2), we read it, and look at each other and discuss it a little and doubt and go on disconsolately, and are satisfied with crumbs when we might feast on the "all things" (1 Cor. 3:21; 2 Cor. 6:10) of the King's table.

The preaching of the law. "They....had the book of the law of the Lord with them" (v. 9). Lesson helps are for faithful study at home. "The teacher who has the lesson in his head and in his heart will not have a lesson help in his hand." A little boy familiar with shows and the world's ways joined a mission school. After a little he asked the superintendent for a Bible. "Why do you wish one?" he was questioned. "I want it to read my lesson." "You have your lesson there," pointing to the scholar's help in his hand. "Yes, but I don't like to read my lesson off of a dodger." Beloved, how is it in your school? Do you read from Bibles or "dodgers"? The teacher should be like his Lord who was "mighty in deed and word" (Luke 24:19), and "began both to do and teach" (Acts 1:1). His should be a Spirit-filled life.

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought—There is joy and success in walking in the good way.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

JEHOSHAPHAT SOUGHT THE LORD

A { FAITHFUL
WISE
PROSPEROUS } KING

A beginning. Say a few words about the preceding lesson directly or by questioning the class. It is not difficult to connect that lesson with the present, since the contrast is strongly marked. Write the name "Ahab," and directly after it, "The worst king of Israel." On a line below write, "Jehoshaphat. One of the best kings of Judah." Having connected this lesson with the one preceding, proceed to connect this with the lesson of two weeks ago by telling the story of the last twenty-six years of Asa's life. See the introduction to the commentary on this lesson (page 28) and read the account in 2 Chron. 15: 16-16: 14.

A king seeking God. Dwell briefly on the fact that Jehoshaphat had a good chance in the world for he was the son of the good King Asa. Show some of the advantages to a child who has pious parents. Refer also to the fact that a son may be good even if his father is bad. Asa was the son of the wicked Abijah. A bad father may also have a bad son, for Abijah's father was the evil King Rehoboam. The son of Jehoshaphat was the wicked Jehoram. Impress the thought that while it is a great blessing to have pious parents, yet it depends upon each one of us as to what our lives shall be. Jehoshaphat sought the Lord. Kings are no better naturally than other people. All need to seek the Lord. Explain that this means to confess one's sins, to turn away from them, to give one's self fully to the Lord and then to trust him to forgive and save.

A faithful king. Jehoshaphat did his duty. Bring before the class the things that he did for the good of his people. Call out by questions and suggestions the children's ideas of their duty, and impress practical truths. Sometimes the doing of duty does not seem to amount to much. On a voyage a ship was leaking and men were set at work pumping out the water. The pumps were kept busy during the whole voyage. When they reached port they said their work was useless, for there was about as much water in the hold as when they began to pump. Their work was not in vain, for it kept the ship from sinking.

A wise king. He saw how greatly his people needed to know the word of God, and made provisions for their being taught. Describe the traveling Sunday-school that Jehoshaphat set in operation. State reasons why we maintain the Sunday-school. Tell how easy it is for children to learn the scriptures and how hard it is for older people.

A prosperous king. Why should he not be prosperous? He sought the Lord. He was faithful in every duty. He knew the law of God and caused the people to know it. Tell how his own kingdom and surrounding nations honored and feared him. If we seek the Lord and find him, and are faithful in all our service to God and our associates, we shall be happy and prosperous ourselves, and others will know that God is with us.

LESSON VI

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Jan. 30.—Note of defiance.—1 Kings 17:1-7. Tu.—Unwasting meal.—1 Kings 17:8-16. Wed.—Widow's son restored.—1 Kings 17:17-24. Th.—Upheld in famine.—Psa. 37:1-27. Fr.—A prophet's reward.—Matt. 10:16-42. Sat.—Elijah sent to Zarephath.—Luke 4:16-30. Su.—Of like passions.—James 5:1-20.

ELIJAH THE PROPHET APPEARS IN ISRAEL.—1 Kings 17: 1-24.

Print 17: 1-16.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 14-16)

SUPT.—1 And Eli'jah the Tish'bite, who was of the inhabitants of Gil'e-ad, said unto A'hab, As the Lord God of Is'ra-el liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

School.—2 And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, 3 Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jor'dan.

4 And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.

5 So he went and did according unto the word of the Lord: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jor'dan.

6 And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.

7 And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.

8 And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying,

9 Arise, get thee to Zar'e-phath, which belongeth to Zi'don, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.

10 So he arose and went to Zar'e-phath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

11 And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.

12 And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

13 And Eli'jah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

14 For thus saith the Lord God of Is'ra-el, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.

15 And she went and did according to the saying of Eli'jah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.

16 And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Eli'jah.

*AMERICAN REVISION

1 And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the sojourners of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As Jehovah, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. 2 And the word of Jehovah came unto him, saying, 3 Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before the Jordan. 4 And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. 5 So he went and did according unto the word of Jehovah; for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before the Jordan. 6 And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook. 7 And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

8 And the word of Jehovah came unto him, saying, 9 Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Sidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow there to sustain thee. 10 So he arose and went to Zarephath; and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks; and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. 11 And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thy hand. 12 And she said, As Jehovah thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in the jar, and a little oil in the cruse; and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. 13 And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said; but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it forth unto me, and afterward make for thee and for thy son. 14 For thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, The jar of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that Jehovah sendeth rain upon the earth. 15 And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. 16 The jar of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of Jehovah, which he spake by Elijah.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. Psa. 34: 10.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—The Lord cares for those who trust and obey him.

TOPIC.—Elijah as God's messenger.

OUTLINE.—I. Elijah's message to Ahab. II. Elijah at Cherith. III. Elijah sustained at Zarephath. IV. The widow's son raised to life.

TIME.—The tenth year of Ahab's reign, B. C. 908.

PLACES.—Samaria, the capital of Israel; the brook Cherith, location not definitely known; Zarephath in Phenicia, between Tyre and Sidon.

INTRODUCTION.—If ever a nation needed the ministrations of a prophet of God, it was the kingdom of Israel. If ever a king needed to be rebuked with severity, it was Ahab. For a kingdom whose founders were instructed in the law and worship of the true God to depart so far from that system as to introduce a degrading, idolatrous religion, and not only that, but to make every possible effort to destroy the worship of the true God, was deplorable indeed. The bold wickedness of Jezebel operating with, and through, the weak Ahab

had brought Israel into a sadly degenerate condition morally, yet the Lord did not despair of an improvement. "Whenever the powers of darkness appear incarnate in some such ruling personage as Jezebel, with her hosts of Baal and Asherah prophets, then our God ordains an incarnation of his divine Spirit and power, with suitable signs and wonders to confuse and confound the ministers of Satan. Such an incarnation was Elijah. Such, too, was Moses in opposition to Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt."—Whedon.

COMMENTARY.—I. ELIJAH'S MESSAGE TO AHAB (v. 1). 1. Elijah the Tishbite.—The prophet is suddenly introduced. No intimation is given regarding his ancestry. The name means "Jehovah is my God." Authorities are not agreed as to why he is called the Tishbite. It is commonly held that he was a native of a place called Tishbe, or Thisbe, in Naphtali, and removed eastward across the Jordan and became an inhabitant of Gilead. Others believe that he was a native of a place called Tishbeh in Gilead. In his disposition he partook of the rugged, mountainous character of the region in

which he lived. His dress was a mantle of camel's-hair cloth or sheepskin worn with the wool outside, and gathered about the loins with a leathern girdle. Such was his appearance as, having left his rugged, mountain home, he appeared at the splendid palace of Ahab. **said unto Ahab**—The Lord had a man in training, under his own direction, for this important mission. The prophet appeared unheralded and abruptly began to deliver his message, **as the Lord God of Israel liveth**—"As Jehovah liveth" was an ancient form of oath in Israel. Ahab had undertaken to put away the worship of Jehovah and had denied that he was Israel's God. Elijah at once affirms the existence and power of Jehovah. **before whom I stand**—As a servant stands before his master and waits to do his bidding, so Elijah waited to do Jehovah's bidding. **not be dew nor rain**—To the people of that country the withholding of the rain meant famine. The rainfall was comparatively scanty at best, and no more than was necessary to produce the crops. A long drought would result in great suffering. "Dew is of far more importance in the East than with us in insuring the growth of the crops; indeed, in this respect, it is almost equivalent to rain."—*Barth*. **these years**—Three and one-half years. See Luke 4:25 and James 5:17. **according to my word**—Elijah was God's appointed agent through whom he ordered the cessation of the rain and through whom the drought should be terminated. His disposition and his attitude toward God were such that he could be entrusted with matters of the greatest importance. The prophet had a mind and a heart to understand God's words and to deliver his messages.

II. **ELIJAH AT CHERITH (vs. 2-7).** **2. the word of the Lord**—God gave directions to Elijah, but we do not know how. We know that the prophet understood them. **3. eastward**—From Ahab's palace in Samaria. **hide thyself**—Since Elijah was the apparent agency in bringing about the drought, the wicked Ahab would naturally seek his life, and it was prudent that he should conceal himself. **by the brook Cherith**—Many scholars fix the location of this stream east of the Jordan from the expression, "before Jordan," which, they say, has that signification. The brook flowed into the Jordan, but whether from the east or the west is uncertain. **4. drink of the brook**—This was to be his water supply. **I have commanded the ravens**—Much has been said against the idea that unclean birds brought food to the prophet, and attempts have been made to substitute the terms, "merchants," "Arabians" or "Orebites" for ravens, but there is no reason why we should not accept the literal meaning of the text.

5. he went and did—His act shows faith in God and obedience to his command. **6. ravens brought him bread and flesh**—As the feeding of Elijah during this period was miraculous, it is needless to conjecture as to the source from which the ravens procured the supply. **morning ... evening**—Two substantial meals a day sufficed the prophet during the time of famine. **7. the brook dried up**—It was probably from six months to a year that Elijah drank of the brook before the lack of rain caused it to cease to flow. See 1 Kings 18:1 compared with Luke 4:25 and James 5:17.

III. **ELIJAH SUSTAINED AT ZAREPHATH (vs. 8-16).** **8. the word of the Lord**—The prophet had believed God and had been receiving food just as it was needed. One has said, "From hand to mouth is a comfortable way to live if it be from the hand of God to the mouth of God's child." He was not surprised to receive further directions from the Lord. **9. get thee to Zarephath**—A village north

of Israel between Tyre and Zidon, now known as Surafend. Ahab had not yet been able to discover his hiding-place and now he passes out of his jurisdiction into a Gentile nation. **dwell there**—This was Jezebel's native country, and it was supporting and harboring the destroyer of Baal. **10. the gate of the city**—All villages and cities were then defended by walls. **widow ... gathering of sticks**—It was the widow to whom the prophet was sent and the prospects for entertainment were by no means flattering, since her poverty was evident from her seeking stray bits of fuel. **a little water**—It is always acknowledged as a duty to give water to the thirsty in the East, even to sharing the last drops. She at once started to fulfil the request. **11. a morsel of bread**—A large demand to be made of a widow in time of famine. **12. thy God**—She was a Gentile yet she acknowledged the God of Elijah whom she probably recognized as a prophet of Israel. **I have not a cake**—A flat cake of unleavened dough ten or twelve inches in diameter. **meal**—Ground wheat. **barrel**—A jar. **oil**—Olive oil. **cruse**—A bottle or flask. **dress it**—Cook it. **die**—They were about to partake of their last meal as they supposed. It was an opportune time for God, through his servant, to make known his power.

13. fear not—The prophet spoke words of assurance as well as authority. His command was a severe test of her faith. If she should provide food for Elijah, she and her son must the sooner perish. **14. thus saith the Lord God of Israel**—He declared the authority upon which he spoke. **meal shall not waste, neither ... oil fail**—Here was to be a miracle continuing as long as the famine lasted. **15. she went and did**—Here was faith on the part of a Gentile woman similar to the faith that Jesus found in another Gentile woman in this same region (Matt. 15:28). **did eat many days**—From two and a half to three years. In nourishing Elijah she saved herself and her son. **16. wasted not**—The meal and the oil multiplied, not in the hoarding, but in the spending.—*Henry*. God usually works in unexpected ways. He has infinite resources at his command. The widow saw only the wasting meal and the failing oil, but with the blessing of the Lord the meal became unwasting and the oil unfailing. "Give, and it shall be given."

IV. **THE WIDOW'S SON RAISED TO LIFE (vs. 17-24).** The faith of this favored woman was to be further tested and strengthened. She attributed the death of her son to some sin in her past life. She felt that the prophet was God's agent in bringing the punishment upon her. Elijah's faith in God did not waver as he made his appeal to him. He was not fully informed as to the divine purpose, for he asked the Lord, "Hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?" The restoration of the widow's son through Elijah's faith brought assurance to her heart, and she was firmly convinced of the truth of the prophet's words, and the power of the God of Israel. The miracle had its effect at the time, and it has been bringing strength and inspiration to hearts during the centuries.

QUESTIONS.—When did Elijah appear to Ahab? Describe Elijah's appearance and character. What was his message to Ahab? Why was this famine sent upon Israel? What reason was there for Elijah to hide himself? Where was he directed to go and how was he supported? How long was he there before the brook dried up? Where was he sent from there? In what direction? What requests did he make of the woman? What miracle was performed? Tell about the death and restoration of the child. What lesson comes to us from the raising of the child to life?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. We pass again from the study of Judah to Israel. 2. The same king in Israel as in the lesson of two weeks ago. 3. Review briefly the history of the kingdom of Israel from Jeroboam to Ahab.

II. THEME.—God's authority, care and power displayed.

III. THE MESSENGER.—1. Elijah's sudden appearance. 2. His nationality and home. 3. His personal appearance. 4. His character. 5. A type of John the Baptist. 6. Raised up for a specific purpose. 7. The outlook before him.

IV. THE MESSAGE.—1. The conditions demanding a message from God. 2. The steps by which the nation had become corrupt. 3. The message delivered. 4. Its directness and positiveness. 5. A calamity foretold which would appeal to Ahab and Jezebel. 6. The serious consequences of a drought. 7. Baal and Asherim were supposed to be the deities presiding over the fruitfulness of herds, flocks and soil. 8. The message was a defiance to the power of those deities. 9. Imagine Ahab's feelings upon receiving such a message.

V. THE MESSENGER PRESERVED FROM AHAB.—1. Study the attitude of Ahab toward Elijah. 2. Note the significance of God's command to Elijah to hide himself. 3. If the prophet had brought on the drought, and had authority to terminate it, then Ahab's design would be to find him and slay him if he would not put an end to the famine. 4. God kept Elijah securely hidden during three and one-half years within a comparatively short distance from Samaria.

VI. THE MESSENGER PRESERVED FROM FAMINE.—1. The sojourn at Cherith. (1) Under God's direction. (2) The location uncertain. (3) The water supply. (4) The food supply. (5) Miraculous. 2. Elijah's faith and obedience. 3. The famine he predicted would affect him as well as the rest. 4. The removal to Zarephath. 5. The unpromising outlook for support at the widow's home. 6. Her despair. 7. Her readiness to grant his requests. 8. Her faith, even though she was a Gentile. 9. In giving the little she had she saved herself and her son. 10. The incident of the restoration of the son's life.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Elijah as God's messenger.

I. Appeared before Ahab and Jezebel.

II. Protected and sustained in solitude.

III. A missionary to the widow and fatherless.

I. Appeared before Ahab and Jezebel. The appearance of Elijah marked a crisis in the history of God's ancient church. He was an extraordinary messenger for a great emergency. He stood alone in the towering height of his fearless manhood. He spoke under the inspiration of Jehovah before whom he stood as his consecrated servant, ever attentive, expectant, ready. His human utterances at Ahab's court were the echoes of the divine will. He was as the revelation of God's presence and power. His words expressed an overpowering conviction that Jehovah lived, and was near and was the God of Israel and would assert his supremacy over all false gods. His abrupt appearance proclaimed God's continued interest in, and sovereignty over, Israel. It was essential to the survival of the true faith that Jehovah should indicate his unseen sovereignty. Ahab was exultant on the success of his wicked policy. The old faith and fervor of the people had so died out that they were quiet under

the bold introduction of Baal and Ashtoreth. Things had reached a dread moral crisis. The seed of sin sown by Jeroboam was fast developing its deadly fruit. A cruel persecution was raging and the prophets of the Lord were being slain. Great miracles were rendered necessary because of a great and national apostasy. The very existence of the church was at stake. Israel was sorely wounded when God sent balak from Gilead. Three years of famine was a recognized penalty for apostasy. Elijah announced its commencement. The conscience of Ahab could interpret only too readily that prophetic menace. He could recognize in Elijah a messenger from his forsaken God, with a message for an apostate people. He well knew that national sin would bring national calamities.

II. Protected and sustained in solitude. There is no limit to the possibilities of God's sustaining and protecting care. Elijah had gone forth into the busy, wicked realm of Ahab's court to do the dangerous work of a prophet with the courage of one who knows that God is with him, that he is the messenger of the divine will, the instrument of a divine purpose, the channel of divine strength. He was as prompt to retire as he was to appear. This was for the ultimate welfare of Israel as also for himself. Alone in quiet communion with his own heart and in earnest prayer to God, Elijah would get refreshment and strength for coming conflict and conquest when he should again appear in Israel. Whether fed by ravens, Arabians, merchants or common people it matters little only so God is the recognized source of protection, refuge and support for Elijah during his waiting time. "They also serve who only stand and wait."

III. A missionary to the widow and fatherless. As Elijah dwelt in his secret place beside the brook Cherith he learned the lesson of dependence upon God in a new and blessed sense. He had yet to learn the lesson of fellowship with humanity. A widow needed spiritual enlightenment. She believed in Jehovah though she dwelt in a heathen kingdom. She needed daily bread. The God of Elijah designed she should have her needs supplied and her faith established. He designed to perfect and prepare Elijah for his mission to her. He needed a home, and to find in the coasts of Tyre, under the rule of Jezebel's father, one who believed in his God would strengthen his faith and keep alive his hope that his work in Israel would not be in vain in the Lord. God rebuked the proud unbelief of his own people by making that poor widow in the midst of idolatrous associations the instrument of his purposes. She was in an intermediate state of mind between blind devotion to the old idolatries and the full acceptance of faith in Jehovah. She evidenced some faith in Jehovah when speaking of trouble that was only threatened (v. 12). She expressed full faith when she said, "By this I know" (v. 24). Her sense of sin was the beginning of her true knowledge of God.

T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

<p>ELIJAH WAS SENT BY GOD TO KEEP ALIVE THE FAITH OF A NATION.</p> <p>GOD'S SUPPLY OF GRACE CANNOT BE EXHAUSTED.</p> <p>IT IS FOR YOU.</p>		<p>CHRIST IS THE TRUE BREAD OF LIFE.</p> <p>HE IS A SHELTER IN THE TIME OF STORM.</p> <p>JEZEBEL CANNOT HARM US.</p>
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Practical Applications

"The Lord... before whom I stand" (v. 1; Luke 1: 19). Because Elijah stood before God he could stand before king, queen, Baal and people. This was the secret of his courage (1 Kings 18: 15). The Christian is separated from the world as "was Elijah the Tishbite... of the inhabitants of Gilead" (v. 1), that he may "stand before the Lord to minister unto him, and to bless in his name" (Deut. 10: 8). To stand before God is to stand fearlessly before men. To speak for God is to be ready to speak against sin.

"Shall not be dew nor rain..." but according to my word" (v. 1). Elijah "prayed in his prayer that it might not rain" (James 5: 17, 18, margin). He prayed before he prophesied. Moses had declared that if Israel worshiped idols God would shut up heaven that it should not rain (Deut. 11: 17), and Solomon in his temple prayer had alluded to this (1 Kings 8: 35), so this prophet of the desert prayed God to demand from his people by his rod an allegiance that had not been accorded to his word. Better that the people suffer the agonies of famine and thirst than think Jehovah like heathen idols. Physical suffering is a smaller calamity than moral iniquity.

"Hide thyself" (v. 3). Self-imposed idleness is not pleasing to God, but divinely directed solitude is a preparation for service. A. C. Peck writes: "If we would win souls, we must be alone with God. To be a prophet is to be a stranger. Prayer is as mighty as ever. Entering every door as God opens it, we may not drop to the level of ordinary small talk and gossip. We have no time for this. Here is a subtle snare. Many have been caught in this devil's trap, set on every side, hidden under the term 'sociability.' Spiritual power is conferred only upon those who abide in the secret place. Let us spend hours of every day in his presence."

"He went and did according unto the word of the Lord" (v. 5). Four times in our lesson is the expression, "The word of the Lord" (vs. 2, 5, 8, 16), in connection with Elijah a type of the saints who are to be translated at the coming of the Lord. The word of God is the life of men (Luke 4: 4). Christ teaches this when he says, "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me" (John 6: 57).

"The brook dried up" (v. 7). The means God has so signally used fail, and we think our living is gone. But is it not written, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14: 19)? God would have us not depend on his providences but on himself. The changing circumstances are food for faith. Our natural tendency to settle down on secondary causes is so great our nest must often be disturbed, that we may learn to trust and obey when "the earthly brooks of blessing on which we have depended dry up and we have to abandon our beloved Cheriths and trust God to feed us without ravens."

"I have commanded a widow" (v. 9). The obedience of faith is not blind presumption. It is resting on the sure foundation of God's unchanging word. Perhaps Elijah thought the "widow" was a wealthy woman, but "behold" she was "gathering of sticks" (v. 10). But that did not matter. God had said, "I have commanded."

"Make me thereof a little cake first" (v. 13). We should always put God "first" and ourselves last. In our ministry of faith make for others "a little cake first" and after make for ourselves. When the demand comes, feed the hungry though our own provision be as the exhausted barrel; speak the word of comfort though our own joy be as the empty censer; offer the prayer of faith though our own need seem as urgent as was the widow's. A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—God takes care of his children.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

Elijah a Prophet of the Lord

ELIJAH ^{fearless}_{faithful}

PRESERVED FROM FAMINE

A prophet of the Lord. Explain that a prophet is one who speaks God's words or foretells future events. God only can enable men to tell what will take place in the future. Tell the story of Elijah's home in the wild mountain region, his manner of dress and his appearance before Ahab. Tell why there was need of the prophet's message at Samaria. Tell the story of Jonah's preaching at Nineveh. Teach the children that all should respect those who are called to speak the words of God as ministers. The story of the destruction of the children who mocked the prophet Elisha would be appropriate. Explain to the children that the people in Elijah's time did not have the Bible as we do now, and there was great need of prophets to bear messages from God to them.

Elijah fearless and faithful. God had been training him in the wilderness for his great work. Tell the story of Moses being trained for forty years in the desert for leadership of the Israelites. Draw a perpendicular line and on one side write "Elijah" and on the other "Ahab." Under each write the words which express their respective characters. Under Elijah's name you will have such words as pious, faithful, fearless, trusting, godly, obedient; and under Ahab's names such words as wicked, cruel, idolatrous, impious, cowardly. Draw out the meaning of Elijah's message to Ahab. Picture the prophet in his coarse attire standing before the king. Show the danger that Elijah was in while telling Ahab such a message. The king had the power of life and death over his subjects, and Ahab would not hesitate to take the prophet's life.

Elijah preserved from death. Show how careful God was to direct the prophet to a safe hiding-place. Elijah was to pray and no rain would fall until he should pray for rain. That time was three and a half years, and God was to keep the prophet alive at least that long. Tell the two places where he was hidden all that time, and how the king looked for him but could not find him. By questions draw out from the children the story of Elijah fed by the ravens at Cherith. The famine was over all the country but God saw that Elijah was provided for. Note the distance and the direction of Zarephath from Cherith. Get before the children a vivid picture of Elijah's arrival at the gates of Zarephath and his meeting with the woman who was to sustain him during the remainder of the famine. Make a very practical lesson of her giving the last she had in faith, and the abundance that came to her and her son. Refer to the increase of the widow's oil, the water turned to wine at Cana or the multitudes fed in the days when Jesus was on earth. If time will permit take up the account of the widow's son being restored to life. Impress the truths of the Golden Text.

LESSON VII

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Feb. 6.—Summons of Elijah.—1 Kings 18: 1-19. Tu.—The god that answereth by fire.—1 Kings 18: 20-24. Wed.—Failure of the Baalites.—1 Kings 18: 25-29. Th.—Fire of Jehovah.—1 Kings 18: 30-40. Fr.—Cloud of light.—Exod. 14: 10-31. Sat.—Fire out of the rock.—Judg. 6: 1-24. Su.—The angel.—Judg. 13: 2-20.

ELIJAH'S VICTORY OVER THE PROPHETS OF BAAL.—1 Kings 18: 1, 2, 17-40.

Print 18: 25-39.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 38, 39)

SUPT.—25 And E-li'jah said unto the prophets of Ba'al, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under.

School.—26 And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Ba'al from morning even until noon, saying, O Ba'al, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.

27 And it came to pass at noon, that E-li'jah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud; for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.

28 And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

29 And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

30 And E-li'jah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down.

31 And E-li'jah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Ja'cob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Is'ra-el shall be thy name:

32 And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord; and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed.

33 And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood.

34 And he said, Do it the second time. And they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time.

35 And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.

36 And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that E-li'jah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of A'bra-ham, I'saac, and of Is'ra-el, let it be known this day that thou art God in Is'ra-el, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word.

37 Hear me, O Lord, bear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.

38 Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

39 And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God.

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25 And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under. 26 And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped about the altar which was made. 27 And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud; for he is a god; either he is musing, or he is gone aside, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked. 28 And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lances, till the blood gushed out upon them. 29 And it was so, when midday was past, that they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening oblation; but there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

30 And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me; and all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of Jehovah that was thrown down. 31 And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of Jehovah came, saying, Is'ra-el shall be thy name. 32 And with the stones he built an altar in the name of Jehovah; and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. 33 And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid it on the wood. And he said, Fill four jars with water, and pour it on the burnt-offering, and on the wood. 34 And he said, Do it the second time; and they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time; and they did it the third time. 35 And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water. 36 And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening oblation, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, O Jehovah, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. 37 Hear me, O Jehovah, hear me, that this people may know that thou, Jehovah, art God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. 38 Then the fire of Jehovah fell, and consumed the burnt-offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. 39 And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, Jehovah, he is God; Jehovah, he is God.

SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—Choose you this day whom ye will serve. Josh. 24: 15.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—Those who are trustful and obedient receive answers to their prayers.

TOPIC.—Decision day in Israel.

OUTLINE.—I. Elijah called to meet Ahab. II. A test proposed. III. The failure of the prophets of Baal. IV. Elijah victorious.

TIME.—About B. C. 905.

PLACE.—Mount Carmel.

READ.—1 Kings 18.

INTRODUCTION.—The three and one-half years of drought had not availed to turn the idolatrous Ahab

and Jezebel from their wicked course. The impotence of their god Baal had been continuously demonstrated during this period. He was supposed to be the sun-god and the god of fruitfulness and harvests, but the fields had remained barren in spite of the devotion of Israel to his worship. Baal was a failure. The test which was made at Carmel was most favorable to the followers of Baal, if their claims meant anything. Being the sun-god, he was supposed to have full power over fire, and hence it would be an easy thing for him to apply fire to the waiting sacrifice. Here again was failure and the falsity of Baal-worship was demonstrated.

COMMENTARY.—I. ELIJAH CALLED TO MEET AHAH (vs. 1, 2). Elijah had been so closely in touch

with God during those years of drought that when his word of command was given he was ready at once to respond. Toward a year had been spent at Oherith and the remainder of the three and one-half years had been spent at Zarephath, and they must have seemed like "many days" to one who was in hiding from the angry king and queen. The time had come when the prophet was to leave his place of waiting and retirement to go forth to action; yet the time which he had spent in quiet was as essential to the working out of God's great plan as were the periods of his activity.

II. A TEST PROPOSED (vs. 17-24). Elijah was a prophet with a message. Ahab introduced himself to Elijah with the accusation, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" The prophet made the bold declaration, "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim," and, as master of the situation, gave direction to assemble the people of Israel and the prophets of Baal and of the groves for a test upon Mount Carmel where it would be determined who was the true God. "Mount Carmel was a bold bluff promontory on the western coast of Palestine. It had several summits. The highest point of the whole range was its eastern extremity, which was doubtless the scene of this event. Here is a perennial fountain from which even in a time of drought, Elijah could have procured the supply of water he used."—*Hurlbut*.

III. THE FAILURE OF THE PROPHETS OF BAAL (vs. 25-29). 25. **Elijah said**—The prophet proceeded with firm confidence in his divinely-appointed mission. **prophets of Baal**—Four hundred fifty in number. **choose you one bullock**—This was the animal usually offered in sacrifice. **for ye are many**—And therefore shall have the preference; and the advantage of being first in your application to the deity.—*Clarke*. **call on . . . your gods**—The priests of Baal appeared to have a decided advantage, first, in point of numbers, and second, in point of the number of their gods. **no fire under**—That there might be an entirely fair test. 26. **no voice**—It was not from any lack of persistency on the part of the priests that Baal did not answer. **leaped upon the altar**—"Leaped about the altar."—*R. V.* They danced around it with strange and hideous cries and gesticulations, tossing their heads to and fro, with a great variety of bodily contortions.—*Clarke*.

27. **Elijah mocked them**—Their frantic efforts from morning until noon had failed to bring any response from their god, and the prophet confident of the divine protection held up their cause to ridicule, that the power of God might be seen in greater contrast to the helplessness of Baal. **cry aloud; for he is a god**—The worshippers of Baal claimed that he was a god, but Elijah repeated their claim with the most biting sarcasm. **he is talking, etc.**—The prophet attributed to Baal the acts and powers of a mere man. 28. **after their manner**—In their frenzy they cried and leaped, and, to emphasize their intense zeal, they thrust their swords into their flesh, mingling their own blood with that of the sacrifice. 29. **prophesied**—They continued to call upon their god. The Hebrew word here translated "prophecy" is also correctly translated "pray," according to the connection in which it occurs. **until the time of . . . the evening sacrifice**—Probably the ninth hour, or three o'clock. **nor any that regarded**—Elijah was certain that this would be the outcome, but the priests of Baal had exerted themselves to the utmost with the hope that he would apply fire to their sacrifice. They had occupied nearly the entire day. They had called

upon their god with loud voices. They had inflicted pain upon themselves. There was nothing more that they could do. They had signally failed.

IV. ELIJAH VICTORIOUS (vs. 30-39). 30. **come near**—There was a calmness in the prophet's manner that was in strange contrast to the frenzy of the Baal-worshippers. The people were invited to witness all that was to be done. **repaired the altar**—Not the altar of Baal but an altar of Jehovah that had been used long before this time. 31. **twelve stones**—It is noticeable that Elijah recognized Israel, not as two kingdoms, but as composed of twelve tribes. See Josh. 4:5. **Israel shall be thy name**—Israel means "prince of God," and was the name given to Jacob at Peniel (Gen. 32:28). 32. **in the name of the Lord**—This expression characterizes all of Elijah's acts. It was for the honor of Jehovah that the people and the priests were called together at Carmel. **a trench**—To catch the water that was to be poured upon the sacrifice. **two measures**—The measure was the "seah," containing from one and one-half to three gallons. Some think the depth of the trench was as great as the height of the two-seah measure. 33. **put the wood in order, etc.**—Thus far the preparations made were similar to those of the priests of Baal. **fill four barrels**—The water-jars such as were used for carrying water and containing from three to five gallons each. **pour it**—There must be no occasion to say that there was fire hidden somewhere about the altar. False religions have resorted to deception to establish their claims to supernatural power, but it must be made clear that there is no trickery here. 34. **third time**—Twelve jars were used, "corresponding to the twelve stones of the altar, and for the same symbolic reason."—*Eder-sheim*. 35. **filled the trench**—Divine power was to be displayed in a remarkable way. To explain the source of the supply of water during the drought, Tristram says, "Close by the place of sacrifice, shaded by a noble old tree, is a large, natural cistern of sweet water, which the people say is never exhausted."

36. **came near**—In calm and trustful boldness. **Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel**—Elijah's address to God was made so complete that no one could doubt to whom he was appealing. **let it be known**—The prophet wished two things made clear: first, that there was a God in Israel, and second, that he was God's servant. 37. **hear me, O Lord**—Elijah's confidence in God finds most pronounced expression in the words of this brief prayer. The answer was not delayed. **turned their heart back again**—His great desire was that the people should turn from idolatry to God. 38. **the fire of the Lord fell**—There was no mistaking its direction nor its power. It came from above and burned downward, commencing with the sacrifice and ending with the water in the trench. 39. **fell on their faces**—They were not only convinced that it was the work of God but fell down before him in an act of worship. **the Lord, he is the God**—The test had declared the existence and power of Jehovah, and the victory of Elijah over the prophets of Baal was complete.

QUESTIONS.—To whom was Elijah sent? What was the feeling of the king toward Elijah? Who arranged for the assembly at Mount Carmel? What test was to be made? Who represented the true God, and who represented the false gods? Describe the efforts of the priests of Baal. Describe Elijah's course after the failure of the priests of Baal. Describe the results of Elijah's prayer. What was remarkable about the prayer? What truths does the lesson teach?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. Trace Elijah's history as given in the preceding lesson. 2. The time spent at Zarephath. 3. Elijah's faith and patience.

II. THEME.—God's cause vindicated.

III. CALLED FROM RETIREMENT.—1. Elijah had been successfully hidden from Ahab who had persistently searched for him. 2. The promise of rain. 3. The severity of the famine. 4. The meeting with Obadiah. 5. The office and character of Obadiah. 6. Obadiah's fearfulness.

IV. THE INTERVIEW OF ELIJAH WITH AHAH.—1. The courage of Elijah in going to meet Ahab. 2. Elijah charged with troubling Israel. (1) Elijah the messenger of God. (2) Ahab's failure to recognize that he himself was bringing trouble upon the nation. 3. Note the noble bearing of the prophet in this interview. 4. The prophet becomes the master and commands the king. 5. The assembly ordered by Elijah. 6. The assembly called together by the king. 7. The place of the assembly. 8. The character of the assembly. Priests. People.

V. THE TEST PROPOSED.—1. Halting between two opinions. (1) The two opinions. (2) Ability to choose. (3) The famine was sent to arouse them to take the right stand. (4) The silence of the people. 2. Those on the side of Baal compared with those on the side of God. 3. The test proposed. (1) Elijah's faith and courage. (2) Sources of his strength. (3) The nature of the test. (4) The challenge accepted.

VI. THE TEST MADE.—1. The two altars compared. 2. The preparation of the followers of Baal, and their efforts to call down fire. 3. The failure. 4. Elijah's preparation of the sacrifice compared with that of Baal's worshippers. (1) In the name of the Lord. (2) The people called to witness. (3) The water poured on. Its purpose. 5. Elijah's prayer. (1) Brief. (2) Directed to the God of Israel. (3) Calm and dignified. (4) Uttered in faith. (5) The answer. 6. The fire. (1) From above. (2) Its course. (3) Its power. 7. The effect on the people. (1) Awed. (2) Convinced. (3) Turned from idolatry.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Decision day in Israel.

I. Elijah defined the nation's guilt.

II. Elijah denounced double-mindedness.

III. Elijah contrasted false and true worship.

IV. Elijah removed hindrances to piety.

I. Elijah defined the nation's guilt. Elijah's reappearance was as public as his retirement had been secret. He was the only prophet of Jehovah who stood forth at this time. He exhibited true courage to stand alone in the cause of God against such powers and numbers. Elijah abruptly threw himself into the current of Israel's national life. One of the worst of kings and one of the best of prophets met. It was an anxious moment for each of them. It was a critical moment in the history of Israel. King Ahab's conscience accused him and he accused Elijah, yet he who would thus accuse God's prophet could not defend himself. Elijah's interview with Ahab was decisive. The king proceeded to obey the prophet's command. He had found his master. The prophet had triumphed already. Truth and the consciousness of right and the power of God's presence proved greater than scepter or crown. The messenger sent to announce a blessing (v. 1) must first convince of sin and secure its removal. Contempt of God and his word

had brought with it ruin and decay. This was the nation's sin and Ahab was the guilty leader in that great apostasy.

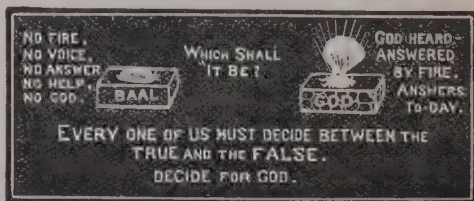
II. Elijah denounced double-mindedness. Halting between two opinions was probably a true description of the mental condition of the great mass of the people. It was the fatal defect in their national character, the sad heritage of earlier days. Their attitude of indecision implied some enlightenment on religious subjects, a contradiction between theory and practise and a dissatisfaction with present conditions. Elijah's rebuke implied their power and obligation to decide though it required courage under Jezebel's rule to become separate worshippers of Jehovah. It was unreasonable and perilous to allow the question of their position in matters of religion to remain unsettled. For indecision there is no defense. Uncertainty and lukewarmness are among the most pitiable of all weaknesses. The people could say nothing to justify themselves and they would say nothing to condemn themselves, but as a people, they let Elijah say what he would.

III. Elijah contrasted false and true worship. The manifestation of God's glory was the hour of sin's overthrow. When the appeal of Elijah to the people met their approval he had the prophets of Baal at his command. His first object was to demonstrate on Mount Carmel the absolute impotence and nothingness of their idolatries. The controversy was whether Baal was independent of Jehovah. His worshippers claimed that for him, Elijah did not multiply arguments with his adversaries. He gave a practical rather than a theoretical demonstration of the power of God. It must have been by special divine direction that Elijah was moved to put the relative claims of God and of Baal to a public test, for it seems a great condescension that God would permit Baal to be a competitor with himself. No challenge could have been more favorable for Baal worshippers, for he was the sun-god and what would be more likely to answer by fire from that blazing sky? In repairing the broken altar Elijah showed that his was no new religion but that of the fathers of the nation. In this he significantly rebuked apostasy. Twelve stones were employed to show that though ten tribes had separated from the "house of David," still in worship there should have been no division.

IV. Elijah removed hindrances to piety. The triumphing of the wicked is but for a season. When all conditions had been fulfilled the people saw the impotence of Baal. Time and effort had been granted to their satisfaction. Their confession in symbol was accompanied by a corresponding confession in words. In their decision they turned from Baal-worship to Jehovah, from idols to the living God. They further proved their decision by obeying the law in the destruction of the authors of their delusion. It was a radical renunciation of the devil with his works.

T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise



Practical Applications

"Come near unto me" (v. 30). To this idolatrous, backslidden people, whose stubborn wickedness had caused him years of wilderness wanderings, Elijah said, "Come near." The words speak of pity, patience, tenderness. Only the patience of Christ (2 Thess. 3: 5, margin), and the love of Christ "put on" (Col. 3: 12-14) will enable us to desire those "near" us who are weak and wicked or who have injured us. The natural man would remove such afar off. But we can never prove what a mighty God is ours unless we can say, with the love and pity of him who died for us, "Come near unto me."

"He repaired the altar of the Lord" (v. 30). An altar stands for worship in the church or at home. A closed church or a home where family prayer is neglected is an altar needing repair. Beloved, is your family altar broken down or out of repair? Better omit breakfast than prayers. A pious farmer, preparing his land, anxious to accomplish much while the weather was favorable, went out early with his men to work. They came in when the breakfast horn sounded, ate and returned to work. They had always had family prayers before, but Satan suggested that to keep so many men from work while he read and prayed was more than he could afford, and the good man yielded. His wife saw with grief the family altar neglected, her husband in haste to get rich and departing from God. One morning those in the field waited in vain for the breakfast horn. At last they hurried to the house, hungry and wondering. No table was set, no kettle boiling on the fire, no cook near it. The good wife was knitting quietly. "What does this mean?" cried the husband. "I thought you were in such a hurry about your work that you hadn't time to eat." "Not time to eat! Do you think we can live without eating?" "You can live without eating as well as without praying. The spirit needs the bread of heaven as much as the body needs the bread of earth." "Well, well," said the farmer, "get breakfast, and we will have prayers again every morning, no matter how many workmen I have." Through God's blessing on the wife's strategy the broken altar was repaired.

"Fill four barrels with water" (vs. 33, 34.) Elijah "was so sure of God that he dared, at his command, to heap difficulties in his way, knowing there was no real difficulty for the Infinite One. The more unlikely the answer the more glory to God. O matchless faith! that laughs at impossibilities and even heaps them one upon another that God may vanquish them!"

"Elijah the prophet came near, and said" (v. 36). Elijah prayed about fifteen seconds. Not "much speaking" (Matt. 6: 7), but faith that God will give what we ask brings the blessing (Matt. 9: 29).

"Let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant" (v. 36). This man, subject to like passions as we are, only desired God's glory. He did not ask to be known as a great prophet, or a worker of miracles, or a leader of the people, but only as an obedient servant doing the will of God.

"Then the fire of the Lord fell" (v. 38). Prayer is meant to be answered. If your prayers are unanswered, there is some reason for it, and you should know it. Perhaps you are unreconciled to some brother (Matt. 5: 23, 24); or ask selfishly that you "may consume it upon your pleasures" (James 4: 3, margin); or there is some "iniquity" hidden in your "heart" (Psa. 66: 18; Jer. 11: 10, 11); or you have "behaved ill" (Mic. 3: 4) and not repented and asked forgiveness. A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—God honors his true followers.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

ELIJAH AND AHAB

PRIESTS OF BAAL }
TRUSTING IN }
FALSE GODS }

DEFEATED

ELIJAH }
TRUSTING IN }
JEHOVAH } VICTORIOUS

Elijah and Ahab. Review the comparison between these two men as drawn in the preceding lesson. Call for brief stories of what was contained in that lesson about Elijah. Tell how the prophet was safely hidden from the wicked and angry king and queen during the three and one-half years of the famine. Here is a fine opportunity to teach the lesson that God knows all things and cares for his children. Impress upon the minds of the children the truth that the famine was sent upon Israel to show them the wickedness of forsaking the true God and serving idols. Tell the story of God's calling Elijah from his hiding-place to meet Ahab, and the meeting of the two men. Because God was with the prophet and protected him Ahab did him no harm. Explain the test that Elijah proposed to make before all the priests of Baal and the people of Israel to show who was the true God.

Priests of Baal defeated. The children have an idea of number and will easily see how large a majority there was on Baal's side. The Baal-priests had the first chance. Draw an outline picture of an altar and tell how the wood and the sacrifice were arranged. Give a word picture of the idolatrous priests trying to get their god to send fire to burn the sacrifice. Let the picture be vivid but truthful. The children will be likely to ask questions about it, but if they do not, you can impress the story by asking them questions. Do not omit to consider Elijah's idea of their god as he mocked them at noon, and how frantic the Baal-priests were until three o'clock in the afternoon, when they acknowledged themselves defeated. Recall the first commandment, and explain in what way the people of Israel under the influence of Ahab and Jezebel had been violating it. The god they were worshipping could not hear.

Elijah victorious. Tell what there was about Elijah that secured the victory for his side. Picture the altar as he repaired it, and all the preparations which he made. Show in what respects the altars and preparations were alike and how they differed. Explain the object in pouring forty or fifty gallons of water on the sacrifice. Read the prayer of Elijah slowly and explain it to the children. You can draw an impressive word picture of the scene, as Elijah, there alone, defending the cause of true religion, prayed to Jehovah, and as the fire fell upon the sacrifice. The effects of the fire were astonishing. The children never saw anything like that, nor had the people on Mount Carmel previously to that time. Dwell upon the effect of this test upon the people. The stories of this lesson carry with them their own teachings. Elijah is one of the Old Testament worthies because he believed God and obeyed him, daring to do anything or go anywhere that he was commanded by the Lord.

LESSON VIII

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Feb. 13.—Elijah running before Ahab.—1 Kings 18: 41-46. Tu.—In the wilderness.—1 Kings 19: 1-8. Wed.—The still small voice.—1 Kings 19: 9-14. Th.—The new ministrant.—1 Kings 19: 15-21. Fr.—Appeal of Moses.—Num. 11: 1-15. Sat.—My heart faileth.—Psa. 73: 1-28. Su.—My groaning is not hid.—Psa. 38: 1-22.

ELIJAH'S FLIGHT AND RETURN.—1 Kings 18: 41-19: 21. Print 19: 1-16.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 11-13)

SUPT.—1 And A'hab told Jez'e-bel all that E-li'jah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword.

School.—2 Then Jez'e-bel sent a messenger unto E-li'jah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time.

3 And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-she'ba, which belongeth to Ju'dah, and left his servant there.

4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree; and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.

5 And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat.

6 And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.

7 And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee.

8 And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Hor'eb the mount of God.

9 And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, E-li'jah?

10 And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Is'ra-el have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

11 And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake:

12 And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.

13 And it was so, when E-li'jah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, E-li'jah?

14 And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: because the children of Is'ra-el have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

15 And the Lord said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Da-mas-cus: and when thou comest, anoint Ha-za'el to be king over Syr'i-a:

16 And Je'ru-hu the son of Nim'shi shalt thou anoint to be king over Is'ra-el: and E-li'sha the son of Sha'phat of A'bel-me-ho'lah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.

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1 And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. 2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time. 3 And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. 4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper-tree: and he requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is enough; now, O Jehovah, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers. 5 And he lay down and slept under a juniper-tree; and, behold, an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. 6 And he looked, and, behold, there was at his head a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. 7 And the angel of Jehovah came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for thee. 8 And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.

9 And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of Jehovah came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? 10 And he said, I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. 11 And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before Jehovah. And, behold, Jehovah passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before Jehovah; but Jehovah was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake; but Jehovah was not in the earthquake: 12 And after the earthquake a fire; but Jehovah was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. 13 And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entrance of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? 14 And he said, I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

15 And Jehovah said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, thou shalt anoint Hazael to be king over Syria; 16 and Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.

SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. Isa. 40: 31.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—God gives his children strength, encouragement and guidance.

TOPIC.—A turning point in Elijah's ministry.

OUTLINE.—I. The drought ended. II. Elijah in flight. III. Elijah refreshed. IV. Elijah encouraged. V. Elijah and Elisha.

TIME.—About B. C. 905.

PLACES.—Mount Carmel; Jezreel; Beer-sheba; Horeb.

INTRODUCTION.—The cause of true religion had realized a distinct triumph upon Mount Carmel. In the destruction of the four hundred fifty prophets of Baal the Mosaic command (Deut. 17: 2-7) had been obeyed, and an important step had been taken in the overthrow of idolatry. The hand of Jehovah was

plainly seen in the fire that fell to consume the sacrifice upon his altar and in the rain that followed in answer to Elijah's prayer; and yet the hardness of Jezebel's heart and the fickle disposition of Ahab blocked the progress of the reform so notably begun. The series of events in Israel commencing with his appearance in Israel and proceeding through the events of this lesson shows human possibilities and limitations. Elijah on Carmel seemed clothed with divine authority, but Elijah in the wilderness under the juniper tree seemed left to himself. His subsequent history is full of instructive lessons.

COMMENTARY.—I. THE DROUGHT ENDED (vs. 41-46). As Elijah had prayed that the rain might be withheld, so also he prayed that the drought might be broken. His attitude in prayer and his persistency indicated his humility, his earnestness, his faith. Both the king and the prophet had returned from the Kishon after the slaughter of the prophets of Baal, the one to feast, the other to pray; and as the small cloud appeared over the Mediterranean Sea, low on the horizon, a sure precursor of rain in that country, Elijah sent the king word to hasten to Jezreel, because the storm was at hand. The prophet was given supernatural strength as he ran before Ahab's chariot the sixteen or seventeen miles from the summit of Carmel to the gates of Jezreel, in the storm that had already broken in fury upon the land that had lain parched for three and one-half years.

II. ELIJAH IN FLIGHT (vs. 1-3). **1. Ahab told Jezebel all**—Jezebel had remained away from Carmel and had kept the priests of Asherah away also. There was much for Ahab to tell: the fruitless efforts of the Baal-followers to obtain an answer from their god; the mocking on the part of Elijah; the calm faith of the prophet; the descending fire; the consuming of the sacrifice, the wood, the altar, the dust and the water; the crying of the people, "The Lord, he is God"; the slaughter of the prophets of Baal; and the prophet's prediction of rain. **2. sent a messenger**—Elijah had discreetly refrained from approaching the royal palace, hence the necessity of sending a messenger. **let the gods do**—One of the most tremendous vows which mark the history of the Semitic race, both within and without the Jewish pale.—*Stanley*. It is evident that Jezebel had a measure of fear of Elijah, or she would have sent officers at once to slay him; but, in sending the threat as she did, she gave him ample time and opportunity to escape. **3. went for his life**—The message of the queen showed that his life was in danger at the hands of this angry and fiendish woman, and prudence led him to do his part in securing his own safety. So far as the record goes we are not informed that God had anything further for the prophet to do in Jezreel at that time. **Beer-sheba**—On the southern borders of Judah, ninety-five miles from Jezreel.

III. ELIJAH REFRESHED (vs. 4-8). **4. into the wilderness**—Where he found the solitude he desired. **juniper tree**—A shrub, known as the broom-tree, which is ten or twelve feet in height and affords scanty protection from the sun's rays. **take away my life**—The bold prophet had become disheartened. The marvelous display of divine power on Mount Carmel had not been followed by the widespread reformation he had hoped, in that the queen was not turned from her idolatry. He was worn and faint from his labors and journey, and from hunger. He felt as if he had done all that he could. His words showed human frailty. **5. slept**—From weariness and possibly from grief.

6. a cake baked—The usual round, flat cake baked upon heated stones. **cruse**—A jar or bottle. **7. the second time**—He had lain down for further rest and sleep, and had not eaten sufficient

for the demands of the journey before him. Food was here miraculously provided for Elijah, as it had been repeatedly before at Cherith and Zarephath. **the journey is too great for thee**—Even if the prophet had made a mistake in fleeing from Jezebel, his journey was to be turned to good account for him. **8. meat**—"Food."—*R. V.* **forty days and forty nights**—Moses had twice fasted the same length of time, and Jesus also fasted forty days. **unto Horeb**—Mount Sinai.

IV. ELIJAH ENCOURAGED (vs. 9-18). **9. unto a cave**—A ruined chapel covers the rock on which the prophet is supposed to have rested. The granite rocks enclose it on every side, as though it were a natural sanctuary.—*Stanley*. The cave is small and would furnish shelter for only one person. **what doest thou here**—The Lord by this question brought a tender reproof to Elijah, and proceeded to give him a deeper revelation of himself than he had ever before received. **10. jealous**—He had defended the honor of Jehovah. **forsaken thy covenant, etc.**—Three charges are made,—disobedience, sacrilege and murder. **I only, am left**—Elijah was the only one on Carmel to defend the God of Israel, and in his despondency and ignorance he thought he was the only one in the nation loyal to Jehovah. **they seek my life**—In the prophet's belief the true religion was all but stamped out. **11. go forth**—The Lord was now ready to teach Elijah his much-needed lesson. He would first gain his attention and then give instruction. **wind . . . earthquake**—These were but the manifestations of God's power, and Elijah recognized them as such. **12. a fire**—A constant blaze of lightning. **the Lord was not in the fire**—He might have spoken by means of the wind or the earthquake or the fire, but he desired to teach Elijah a lesson that could not be presented in that way. **still small voice**—With the voice came the conviction to the prophet that God was speaking directly to him.

13. wrapped his face in his mantle—An act of reverence and awe. He waited to hear what the Lord would say further to him. He heard the question recorded in verse 9 repeated, and answered it in the same way. **15. go, return**—Elijah had traveled three hundred miles on foot to receive his orders, and must return the entire distance to carry them out. **Damascus**—The capital of Syria. **anoint**—An important commission was given Elijah. "It is the word of the Lord foretelling the agencies by which the wicked house of Ahab shall be destroyed."—*Whedon*. Elijah anointed Elisha to be a prophet in his stead, but we have no record that he anointed Hazael or Jehu, yet he may have done so privately. His successors performed these offices. **17, 18.** Elijah could be lonely no longer. God had revealed himself to him, had given him a definite work to do, and now he declares that there are thousands of people in Israel true to his God.

V. ELIJAH AND ELISHA (vs. 19-21). Elijah's northward journey must have been a joyous one compared with that to Horeb. His mission to Elisha was entirely successful and that young man at once prepared to follow him after Elijah's mantle had been thrown upon him. Elisha became his constant attendant.

QUESTIONS.—Describe the scene of Elijah at prayer for rain. Describe the journey to Jezreel. What was Jezebel's feeling toward Elijah as she learned what had been done at Carmel? Where did the prophet go from Jezreel? For what did Elijah wish? How was he fed in the wilderness? Describe Elijah's experience at Horeb. Upon what mission was he sent from Horeb? What did Elisha do after Elijah had cast his mantle upon him?

A Teaching Plan

I. **INTRODUCTORY.**—1. The slaughter of the prophets of Baal connects the last lesson with this. 2. Review the traits manifested by Elijah in the preceding lesson. 3. The great work assigned to the prophet had for its object the destruction of idolatry in Israel.

II. **THEME.**—Refreshment and encouragement for the weary and disheartened.

III. **THE PRAYER FOR RAIN.**—1. The time and place. 2. There were no indications of rain. 3. Elijah's attitude in prayer. 4. His persistency. 5. His repeated commands to his servant to look for signs of rain did not evince lack of faith. 6. The way storms develop in that country. A small cloud appears low over the sea and rapidly rises to overspread the sky, and a sudden downpour follows. 7. The run to Jezreel. Elijah loyal to the king. 8. Ahab was then favorably disposed toward the prophet.

IV. **A DISHEARTENED PROPHET.**—1. Why Elijah was disheartened. The angry threat of Jezebel. 2. If Jezebel had been an eye-witness to the scene at Carmel, she might have felt differently. 3. The prophet's flight to Beer-sheba to save his life. Did he make a mistake in fleeing? 4. His flight to save his life compared with his desire to die. 5. His mental distress over the condition of Israel, and his bodily weariness and hunger together with his loneliness served to deeply dishearten him. 6. Human weakness displayed.

V. **REFRESHED AND ENCOURAGED.**—1. Refreshed by sleep. 2. Refreshed by food miraculously provided. 3. His own explanation of his presence in the wilderness. (1) The covenant broken by Israel. (2) The true worship destroyed. (3) His own life sought. 4. God's power in nature displayed. 5. God was in the fire at Carmel, but not, in an especial sense, at Horeb. 6. The voice distinctly recognized and its effect upon Elijah. The effect of God's voice upon us. 7. God encouraged Elijah by preserving his life and speaking to him. 8. The seven thousand in Israel faithful to God.

VI. **A TASK ASSIGNED.**—1. It is an encouragement to one if he has something to do and ability to do it. 2. The prophet's work not yet done. 3. If the marvelous event on Carmel would not destroy the worship of Baal, other means would be employed. Hazeal, Jehu and Elisha to be instrumental in its overthrow. 4. Elisha appointed Elijah's successor. (1) A busy man. (2) A ready man. (3) An obedient man. (4) A successful man.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—A turning-point in Elijah's ministry.

I. Caused a sudden revulsion of feeling.

II. Brought a new revelation from God.

III. Resulted in aggressive work in Israel.

I. Caused a sudden revulsion of feeling.

In this narrative God's pity is as conspicuous as his knowledge. Elijah's desire that rain might come at once in accordance with God's promise and so cause the seed of faith to spring up in the hearts of the people, made him more in earnest to pray than to seek food for his body. Who had greater cause than Ahab to seek solitude and to fall on his knees and say, "God be merciful to me"? But he went up to eat and drink while Elijah prayed. He rode in his chariot to Jezreel while Elijah ran before him in the hope that now king and queen would acknowledge God and repent, but when they conferred with each other, they grew desperate in proportion as

they had been baffled and mortified. In his report to Jezebel Ahab did not recount what Jehovah had done. Jezebel's oath showed the intensity of her rage, but her message defeated her own object. In his former danger God had bidden Elijah to hide himself, therefore he supposed he should again pursue the same course. He took the providence which apprised him of his peril as the voice of God. Once alone Elijah felt himself reduced to entire uncertainty about all God's dealings with him and with mankind. There was a sense of powerlessness before the difficulties of his position, including doubt as to the wisdom of what he had done. He had a sense of utter and seemingly irretrievable failure.

II. **Brought a new revelation from God.** The Lord pitied his poor suffering servant and gently led him back to hope and happiness. He was strengthened by an angel, a clear token that his condition was one of severe temptation, but not of guilt or sin. Elijah's thoughts of God's ways were corrected. He was delivered from his depression by learning that God was near, that success was assured, that work was waiting. Upon reflection he came to feel that permanent religious reformation might not result from the material signs of divine power displayed in the withholding of rain, the raising of the dead or the fall of fire on Carmel, but from the more quiet testimony of his own devout life and from the fidelity of the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. God spoke through his conscience, causing him to feel that he was not alone, and that God had not ceased to watch over and care for his own people. He was reminded that though it was a time of great degeneracy and apostasy God had a remnant of faithful people, and that the faithful ones might also be the hidden ones. Elijah had felt that it was a single-handed conflict in which he was engaged. The repetition of his answer when a second time the question was put, "What doest thou here?" evinces the deep sincerity of the prophet's soul. Elijah was there because he thought he could not abide in the land of Israel where Jehovah was commonly insulted. The wind, the earthquake and the fire were emblems of the conspicuous and extraordinary manner in which Elijah probably expected the work of God to be carried on. He was apt to overestimate the power of that which comes with observation. The vision of God changed all this and he was prepared for future service.

III. **Resulted in aggressive work in Israel.** In the former retirement to which God sent Elijah (chapter 17) he was a blessing to a poor widow, but at this time retirement was out of place, for there he had no opportunity of doing good. The Lord encouraged and instructed him and sent him back to his proper work, giving him a helper with promise of success. The answer of the Lord to Elijah's repeated complaint contained direction, a commission and a promise. Through Hazeal he would chastise Israel, through Jehu destroy the house of Ahab, and through Elisha preserve the order of prophets. T.R.A.

Blackboard Exercise



Practical Applications

"The word of the Lord came" (v. 9). As Elijah bravely faced the wrath of Ahab, as he waited patiently by the brook Cherith, as he ministered to the widow in the solitudes of Zarephath, "the word of the Lord came unto him" (1 Kings 17:2, 8; 18:1). So it comes to him now when he has forgotten to be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, comes to him in the tenderly spoken rebuke, "What doest thou here?" If Elijah had answered truly he would have said, "I was afraid for my life; I doubted your love; your faithfulness, your power to protect me against Jezebel; forgive me, Lord." If thus the prophet had spoken, he would quickly have been restored and reinstated, and the reform would have gone gloriously on, and there would have been other great deeds and mighty miracles. But he only contrasted his fidelity with the people's faithlessness (v. 10). So God was patient and continued to rebuke him, saying, "Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord" (v. 11). Go out of thy cave, thy dark, narrow, petty view of circumstances, back to the mountain-top experience "before the Lord" (v. 11), which you had when you began this service (1 Kings 17:1). Go out, up into a pure, clear, high altitude. "Life is for doing. A prophet's life for nobler doing; and the prophet was not doing, but moaning." In time of lethargy or despondency, the same voice says to us, What "doest" thou here? There is work to be done; the reclaimed need encouragement; those who have not bowed to Baal need a leader; the heart-broken need comfort; the sick need healing; the hungry need food, and the poor need the gospel preached to them.

"Go, return on thy way" (v. 15). He who "went for his life" (v. 3) must go back where it would be again in danger. If you have wandered from God, by doubt and disobedience, go back where your failure began. One remedy for past failure is attention to present duty. "Jehu...anoint to be king" (v. 16). Anointing typifies the work of the Holy Spirit. The priest was anointed in token that he was set apart for the Lord's work (Lev. 8:12). The king was anointed that the Spirit of the Lord might rest upon him in power (1 Sam. 16:13). The prophet was anointed that he might be the oracle of God, speaking "unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort" (1 Cor. 14:3); and of him who was Prophet, Priest and King, it is thrice recorded that he was anointed (Luke 4:18; Acts 4:27; 10:38). And we who follow him, having received the Spirit, may say, "He which...anointed us, is God" (2 Cor. 1:21); and the anointing abideth (1 John 2:27). "Anoint...Elisha...to be prophet in thy room" (v. 16). Elijah's work must draw to a close. God has designs beyond his service. The true conception is that we are only links in a chain.

"I have left me seven thousand in Israel" (v. 18). Elijah mourned that in vain had he shut heaven and opened it, brought famine and removed it, defeated Baal's prophets and ordered them slain. His life after all had been a failure. But God assured him that his silent prayer, earnest protests and heroic work had kindled zeal in many a Hebrew home and strengthened faith in many a fainting heart, for there were thousands that had not bowed the knee to Baal, nor kissed him. Beloved, take heart; there are other faithful ones besides you. "That harsh-seeming governor is a Joseph in disguise (Gen. 45:2; 50:21). That wealthy owner of the garden in Arimathea is a lowly follower of Jesus." An Elisha is waiting somewhere to be your companion and successor. Trust in God and go forth with courage and faith.

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—God upholds his children in times of trouble.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

Elijah { AT PRAYER
DISCOURAGED
ENCOURAGED

Preliminary. Spend a very few minutes in rapid questioning upon the scene on Mount Carmel when the test was made between the true religion and the false. In the higher primary grades it might be well to mention the destruction of the prophets of Baal, giving God's commands as recorded in Deut. 17:2-7. There is opportunity in this lesson for three interesting stories,—one, the prayer for rain, another, the flight to the wilderness, and the third, the scene at Horeb.

Elijah's prayer for rain. Describe the appearance of the fields, the roads and the water-courses in that land after the prolonged drought of three and one-half years. The children will remember how dry, parched and dusty the ground was last summer when no rain had fallen for a few weeks. Tell again why the drought was sent. On Mount Carmel Ahab was feasting. Elijah was praying and Elijah's servant was watching for signs of rain. Elijah had prayed just before this and fire fell, and now he was praying for water to fall. Describe the little cloud rising over the sea, its rapid increase in size and the bursting storm, and the swift journey of the prophet to Jezreel. Ahab ought to have believed that the God who sent fire and rain as Elijah prayed was the true God.

Elijah cast down. Ask the children what there was for Ahab to tell Jezebel about that had taken place that day at Carmel, and what reason she had for being angry at Elijah. Tell them that the prophet thought, after the test to prove who was the true God, the king and queen and all the people would give up the worship of Baal, but he was greatly disappointed. Picture Elijah's long flight to Beer-sheba and a day's journey alone into the wilderness to save his life. Use a map to make his course clear.

Elijah encouraged. Note the prophet's prayer under the juniper tree in contrast to his prayers at Carmel. This prayer was not one of submission and trust. Tell his need of encouragement and how his hunger was satisfied. Ask the class to recall how he had been miraculously fed before. Elijah went in the strength of this food forty days. Mention Moses' two fasts and Christ's fast of the same length of time. The wind, the earthquake and the fire should be described, and explained as being sent by the Lord to show him God's great power. He might have spoken to the prophet out of the wind, the earthquake or the fire, but he chose to speak in the still small voice that caused him to wrap his face reverently in his mantle. Elijah was given other work to do. God entrusted important duties to him. He will give us work to do. Tell how lonely the prophet felt because he thought he was the only one left who was true to God, and how greatly the Lord encouraged him by telling him there were seven thousand more in Israel who did not believe in Baal. If time permits describe how Elisha became Elijah's servant and successor.

LESSON IX

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Feb. 20.—Coveting of Ahab.—1 Kings 21: 1-16. Tu.—The king arraigned.—1 Kings 21: 17-29. Wed.—Prophecy fulfilled.—2 Kings 9: 21-37. Th.—Coveting of Achan.—Josh. 7: 10-26. Fr.—Coveting of Eli's sons.—1 Sam. 2: 11-25. Sat.—Coveting of Gehazi.—2 Kings 5: 1-27. Su.—Covetousness.—1 Tim. 6: 1-19.

ELIJAH MEETS AHAB IN NABOTH'S VINEYARD.—1 Kings 21: 1-29. Print 21: 11-20.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 17-19)

*AMERICAN REVISION

SUPT.—11 And the men of his city, even the elders and the nobles who were the inhabitants in his city, did as Jez'e-bel had sent unto them, and as it was written in the letters which she had sent unto them.

School.—12 They proclaimed a fast, and set Na'both on high among the people.

13 And there came in two men, children of Be'li-al, and sat before him: and the men of Be'li-al witnessed against him, even against Na'both, in the presence of the people, saying, Na'both did blaspheme God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died.

14 Then they sent to Jez'e-bel, saying, Na'both is stoned, and is dead.

15 And it came to pass, when Jez'e-bel heard that Na'both was stoned, and was dead, that Jez'e-bel said to A'hah, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Na'both the Jez'reel-ite, which he refused to give thee for money: for Na'both is not alive, but dead.

16 And it came to pass, when A'hah heard that Na'both was dead, that A'hah rose up to go down to the vineyard of Na'both the Jez'reel-ite, to take possession of it.

17 And the word of the Lord came to E-li'jah the Tish'bite, saying,

18 Arise, go down to meet A'hah king of Is'ra-el, which is in Sa-mar'i-a: behold, he is in the vineyard of Na'both, whither he is gone down to possess it.

19 And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Na'both shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.

20 And A'hah said to E-li'jah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord.

11 And the men of his city, even the elders and the nobles who dwelt in his city, did as Jezebel had sent unto them, according as it was written in the letters which she had sent unto them. **12** They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people. **13** And the two men, the base fellows, came in and sat before him: and the base fellows bare witness against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did curse God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him to death with stones. **14** Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead. **15** And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead. **16** And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

17 And the word of Jehovah came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, **18** Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who dwelleth in Samaria: behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to take possession of it. **19** And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine. **20** And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee, because thou hast sold thyself to do that which is evil in the sight of Jehovah.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—Take heed, and beware of covetousness. Luke 12: 15.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—One sin leads to another.

TOPIC.—The sentence of death.

OUTLINE.—I. Ahab's covetousness. II. Jezebel's cruel plot. III. Naboth shamefully executed. IV. Elijah's prophecy against Ahab.

TIME.—About B. C. 900.

PLACES.—Samaria, the capital of Israel; Jezreel, one of the king's dwelling-places.

READ.—1 Kings 20.

INTRODUCTION.—It was probably about five years after the flight of Elijah from Jezreel, at the end of the drought which came in answer to his prayer, that he was called again to Jezreel to face Ahab in his ill-gotten possession of Naboth's vineyard. The prophet seems to have spent this time in comparative quiet, probably as leader of the schools of the prophets. The Syrians, under their king, Benhadad, had invaded Israel and made great havoc in the kingdom. At last deliverance came through "the young men of the princes of the provinces" (1 Kings 20: 15), two hundred thirty-two in number, and the Syrians were defeated with great loss. Ahab failed to make a proper use of the victory thus gained (1 Kings 20: 35-43), and Syria continued to be a menace to the peace of his kingdom. Idolatry continued to flourish, but the deities of this false religion failed to keep the enemies of Israel from oppressing them. The only help that came to Israel was through the true God. The lesson to-day discloses to us further glimpses of the despicable characters of Ahab and Jezebel. "This story is given because it was the outward

expression of Ahab's depraved character, which led to his doom; as a boil expresses bad blood, or a furred tongue the inward fever."—*Peloubet*.

COMMENTARY.—I. AHAB'S COVETOUSNESS (vs. 1-6). There was no wrong in Ahab's wish to secure the desirable piece of property which lay close to his palace at Jezreel, provided he had no purpose of resorting to unjust means to obtain it. Naboth was justified in withholding the vineyard from Ahab, because "the permanent sale of the paternal inheritance was forbidden by law (Lev. 25: 23-28; Num. 36: 7-9), and it would seem like a denial of his allegiance to the true religion to sell it when the jubilee restoration was neglected in these idolatrous times." It is an unfavorable view that we get of Ahab as we see him sulking in his bed-chamber because his wish is not granted. His conduct reminds us of that of a peevish, pampered child. He "became miserable because he could not get a poor man's vineyard added to all that he possessed. It is a true saying, 'That soul in which God dwells not, has no happiness, and he who has God has a satisfying portion.'"—*Clarke*. In telling his trouble to Jezebel he handed his case over to a resourceful, conscienceless, cruel woman, who would hesitate at no iniquity if only she might accomplish her end.

II. JEZEBEL'S CRUEL PLOT (vs. 7-10). Jezebel appeared to hurl contempt at Ahab's weakness. In her view it was unreasonable for him, a king, to hes-

itate to appropriate Naboth's vineyard if he wanted it. She might have said, "Is Naboth king? or are you? Cheer up, Ahab, and eat. I will get the vineyard for you." To the reproach of Israel it must be said that Jezebel was the real head of the government. She assumed royal authority, issued the murderous decree, affixed the king's seal, and Naboth was a doomed man. Ahab was no less guilty than she, for he was knowing to the transaction and was responsible for the use of his seal upon the document that meant Naboth's death. Jezebel may be appropriately classed with Herodias who caused the death of John the Baptist.

III. NABOTH SHAMEFULLY EXECUTED (vs. 11-14).

11. his city—Jezreel, about twenty miles north of Samaria. The king and queen were at the latter city. **elders....nobles**—Those in authority in the city. The elders were the representatives of the tribes dwelling in Jezreel. The nobles were leading men, socially, in the city. **did as Jezebel had sent unto them**—Her letter to the elders of Jezreel speaks out, with cynical disregard of decency, the whole ugly conspiracy. It is direct, horribly plain, and imperative. There is a perfect nest of sins hissing and coiled together in it,—hypocrisy calling religion in to attest a lie, subornation of evidence, contempt for the poor tools who are to perjure themselves, consciousness that such work will only be done by worthless men, cool lying, ferocity and murder.—*McLaren*. The letter came to the elders and nobles bearing the royal authority since the king's seal was affixed. "In giving validity to documents, names were not in those days, nor are they now in the East, signed by the hand in writing, but impressed by a seal on which the name is engraved. Hence the importance which is attached to the signet throughout the sacred books."—*Kitto*.

12. proclaimed a fast—The elders and nobles were carrying out Jezebel's directions. The proclamation of a fast indicated that there was cause for humiliation, either because of some calamity that had fallen upon the city or was about to fall. Jezebel did not scruple to attempt to cover her cruel perfidy with a cloak of religion. **set Naboth on high**—They made the case as public as possible, so that when the witnesses testified against him, indignation would be strong. **13. two men**—Under the Mosaic law the testimony of two witnesses was necessary to condemn one to death. **children of Belial**—"Base fellows."—*R. V.* Belial is not a proper name. It means "worthlessness," "recklessness." The sons of Belial were ready to become just such witnesses as Jezebel's conspiracy demanded. **Naboth did blaspheme God and the king**—There was not the slightest proof that Naboth was guilty of blasphemy against God. As to his blaspheming the king, it was unjust to construe his refusal to transfer to the king the vineyard, which was his ancestral possession, as either treason or blasphemy. **carried him forth**—According to Jewish law executions must take place "without the camp," or city (Lev. 24:13-16). **stoned him with stones**—The prescribed manner of inflicting the death penalty. The two witnesses were to cast the first stones at the condemned man. **he died**—The execution of Naboth was an atrocious murder. It appears that the sons of Naboth were slain at the same time (2 Kings 9:26). **14. they sent to Jezebel**—The elders and nobles had lent themselves to the wicked Jezebel to become the murderers of an innocent man and then made their official report to her. Among other sins involved in this series were covetousness, lying, perjury and murder. "The wild license of Jezebel's life, the magical fascination of her arts or of her character, became a prov-

erb in the nation (2 Kings 9:22). Long afterward her name lived as the byword of all that was execrable, and in the Apocalypse it is given to a church or an individual in Asia Minor, combining in like manner fanaticism and profligacy" (Rev. 2:20).—*Smith*.

IV. ELIJAH'S PROPHECY AGAINST AHAH (vs. 15-29).

15. take possession of the vineyard—Jezebel's plot seemed thus far to be successful. The death of Naboth and his sons apparently left no legal heir to the land, hence the way was open for Ahab to lay claim to it. **16. Ahab rose....to take possession**—At last the coveted prize was within his reach, and he was ready to take it, no matter at what cost of innocent blood. The satisfaction which he hoped to secure from the possession of the vineyard was destined to be turned into bitterness. There is a sort of pleasure in acquiring property in a just way, but when possession is gained through deception or blood the acquisition is a burden and a source of pain.

17. word of the Lord came to Elijah—Although the prophet seemed to Ahab to have disappeared from Israel after the test at Carmel and the restoration of the rains, he was within hearing distance of Jehovah, ready to do his bidding. **18. to meet Ahab**—Elijah had met Ahab with messages from the Lord at the beginning of the drought, and again at its close. Once more he was called to face the guilty king. **which is in Samaria**—"Who dwelleth in Samaria."—*R. V.* The expression is used to indicate that Ahab was king and had his official residence in Samaria. **in the vineyard of Naboth**—The Lord gave the prophet explicit information as to where Ahab was and his errand there. **19. hast thou killed**—The question does not imply doubt, but is the strongest kind of affirmation. **thus saith the Lord**—Ahab and his wicked queen had proceeded in their fiendish purpose regardless of right or of Jehovah, but they must be made to know that Jehovah has regard for human conduct, and their wrongs must be expiated. **shall dogs lick thy blood**—Because of Ahab's repentance and humiliation (v. 29), this prophecy was not literally fulfilled in him, though at the pool of Samaria dogs did lick up his blood that fell on his chariot (1 Kings 22:38); but it was afterward fulfilled in his son, on whom Jehovah laid the burden (2 Kings 9:25).—*Wheeler*. **20. hast thou found me, O mine enemy**—As the king had previously regarded Elijah as one who troubled Israel (1 Kings 18:17), so now he looked upon him as his enemy, failing to recognize in the prophet simply the messenger of God to him. **sold thyself**—Ahab stopped at no iniquity so long as he might gratify his depraved ambitions.

21-29. The prophet foretold the utter destruction of Ahab's family and the fate of Jezebel. Although the king was guilty of abominable evils, yet at the words of God by Elijah he came to himself sufficiently to humble himself before the Lord, and the threatened destruction was delayed for a time, but it was only delayed. The penalty must be executed. As we study the history of men and nations we are amazed at the great forbearance of God, yet we know that his judgments must fall at last.

QUESTIONS.—What request did Ahab make of Naboth? Why would it have been improper for Naboth to grant it? Where was Naboth's home? What were Ahab's feelings when his request was refused? Describe the course that Jezebel took. Of what sins was Jezebel guilty in this matter? Of what sins was Ahab guilty? How did Ahab and Elijah come to meet in Naboth's vineyard? Why did Ahab call Elijah his enemy? What penalty was pronounced upon Ahab? Upon Jezebel?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. The impression that the preceding lesson gives us of Elijah's character. 2. His probable occupation between his casting his mantle upon Elisha and his appearing to Ahab in Naboth's vineyard. 3. Ahab and Benhadad at war.

II. THEME.—The progressive character of sin.

III. THE SIN OF COVETOUSNESS.—1. Relative position of Samaria and Jezreel. 2. Reasons why Ahab desired Naboth's vineyard. 3. Reasons why he should not have it. 4. The effect of disappointed ambitions. 5. Ahab's weakness of character. (1) A sulking disposition, (2) His readiness to allow Jezebel to do the despicable deed for which he did not wish to be personally responsible. (3) Yielding to the leadership of his conscienceless, heathen wife. 6. Covetousness was the beginning of a chain of abominable wrongs. 7. What sins to-day follow in the train of covetousness or greed?

IV. A HORRIBLE CONSPIRACY.—1. What stood in the way of Ahab's ambition? Not money, but the rights of another. 2. The cruel plot of Jezebel involved: (1) Hypocrisy, a fast proclaimed. (2) Subornation of witnesses, procuring false witnesses. (3) Perjury, giving false testimony. (4) The death of an innocent man and his sons (2 Kings 9: 26). 3. One sin leads to another. 4. Note the number of people involved in this series of sins. The power of influence and example.

V. THE CONSEQUENCES.—1. Consider the trouble that came to Ahab with the possession of Naboth's vineyard. (1) Short-lived satisfaction. (2) The meeting of Ahab and Elijah explained. (3) Ahab's guilty conscience manifested. (4) The vineyard was obtained by blood, and the vineyard called for blood. 2. The outlook before Ahab and Jezebel. 3. Ahab was not wholly beyond the possibility of being moved to humble himself. 4. God's estimate of Ahab's character set forth in verses 25 and 26. 5. God's faithfulness in reproving wickedness. 6. The dire consequences of evil associations.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—The sentence of death.

- I. Executed upon Naboth's household.
- II. Pronounced upon Ahab's household.


I. Executed upon Naboth's household. This chapter describes one of the blackest crimes which ever blotted the page of history. Nothing but evil can be expected when Jezebel acts a part. In this tragedy her scheme was as subtle as it was sinful. Her crime was committed under cover of religion and of justice and with the formalities of a legal proceeding. It was a combination of the heaviest crimes, for by it Jezebel trampled under foot three divine commands: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour," "Thou shalt not kill," "Thou shalt not steal." Jezebel, the sworn foe of the law of Jehovah, availed herself of its forms to compass Naboth's death. Crafty use she made of the hated system of the Jews. Naboth was slain because of his belief in a living God and because he kept his law. To sell his vineyard was a crime against Jehovah and a wrong to his ancestors and to his posterity. Yet he was murdered by men, who in the name of law, violated all the laws of God. Never were wicked orders more wickedly obeyed. Godlessness and corruption in courts is a poison which extends throughout the whole body politic even to the lowest rank. Ahab did wrong in tempting Naboth to transgress the commandment

of the Lord. His discontent born of covetousness brought its own punishment. Discontent was a disease of his soul rather than distress arising from circumstances. His covetousness seared his conscience, starved his intellect, destroyed his religion, smothered every noble feeling and grew worse and worse. Mark the progress of that sin from covetousness to discontent, to evil counsel, to lying, to robbery, to murder, to retribution on himself, to ruin of his family. Ahab's discontented habit of mind embittered everything. His inordinate desires exposed him to continual vexations and he found no success through crime. His covetousness had its root in selfishness and gave him a spirit of discontent which led to conspiracy and developed into murder. Its penalty was death.

II. Pronounced upon Ahab's household. Ahab thought more of the enlargement and adornment of his garden than of the good of his subjects. Nothing was farther from Ahab's thoughts than an encounter with the earnest, severe preacher of repentance, and of hearing from him the words of divine judgment. Elijah's calling was to proclaim the laws of eternal righteousness, to vindicate the oppressed and to rebuke injustice. His fearless courage again asserted itself and once more the king quailed before his words of terrible denunciation. King Ahab, the executor and guardian of law, had connived at the murder of a law-abiding citizen. The blood of Naboth, which Ahab thought had been swallowed up by the earth, cried to heaven and found there judgment and vengeance. God is the unseen avenger of the innocent. The advantage of Ahab's crime was snatched from him at the instant he felt he was most secure in its possession. Elijah had become to Ahab the incarnation of his own awakened conscience and it spoke to him as in the thunders of Sinai. Never was king confronted with so awful a denunciation of doom. It was not because of Naboth's murder alone that the death sentence was pronounced against Ahab and his house, but for the varied and accumulated sins of a reign of twenty years of which this crime was the climax. Ahab's remorse was wanting in the elements of true repentance. His humiliation consisted in terror, but no change of heart or life. He shrank from punishment but not from guilt, from fear of judgment but not from loathing of sin. His garments were rent but not his heart. His penitence, though it does not seem to have been lasting, was not wholly in vain. God observed the repentance of Ahab and called Elijah's attention to it. So merciful is he and so long-suffering in his dealings with weak humanity that the hardest heart must own him just. Though the sentence of death upon Ahab and his family should not be revoked, the execution should be suspended. The postponement of punishment was to give opportunity for more genuine repentance, and if not improved to show forth unto men the necessity of chastisement. God is exalted in his justice as in his mercy.

T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

<p>COVETOUSNESS LED AHAB AND JEZEBEL TO COMMIT MURDER.</p> <p>HAS SLAIN ITS THOUSANDS.</p> <p>DOES IT CONTROL YOUR HEART?</p>		<p>THE LOVE OF MONEY CAUSES NATIONS TO WINK AT SIN.</p> <p>LICENSES THE SALE OF LIQUOR.</p> <p>IT MURDERS THE INNOCENT.</p> <p>DEFEATS JUSTICE.</p>
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Practical Applications

Covetousness. The covetous are those who envy the appearance, power, position or possessions of another; who desire passionately the houses, lands, money or friends of others; who greedily pursue wealth, honor or pleasure; who long inordinately for anything God withholds, or who value things seen above things not seen. We should:

Solicit satisfaction. Not circumstances, but contentment secures happiness. Ahab, the king, with vast possessions, is heavy and displeased and turns his face to the wall, and will not eat bread, because he can not have one little garden of herbs. Paul, the prisoner, denied every comfort, sings in the dungeon, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content" (Phil. 4: 11, 12, R. V.). He "coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel" (Acts 20: 33). Only those who have been converted, and become as little children, know anything about Christian contentment.

Shun small evils. A proverb reads, "If thy foe be small as a gnat, fancy him as large as an elephant." In dealing with sin we must resist the smallest temptation as sturdily as the largest. A young miller said to a friend, "The water is leaking through my mill-dam, I see, but the hole is only a little one." "I would try to fancy it a big one if I were you, for if not attended to it will soon be big enough," was his friend's reply. But the young miller neglected the advice, and the water broke his mill-dam. Sin neglected at the beginning gains in strength and intensity. Ahab's first sin was years before, when he married an immoral, heathen princess.

Sacrifice self. Present the body a living sacrifice to God (Rom. 12: 1). One who can say, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2: 20), is satisfied with God's provision for him. One who considers himself with all he has, and all he hopes to have, as belonging to God, will be saved from the depression arising from the desire for more. A blind fruit-vender, who had been accustomed to repine when sales were small, was converted. Shortly his wife asked, "What kind of a day have you had, John?" He only laughed and said, "The kind of a day our Father wanted me to have. The business is his now, and if he wants a poor day I've nothing to grumble about."

Seek spiritual gifts. Covet those graces God only can bestow (1 Cor. 12: 8, 10, 31; 14: 1). Covet faith, the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (Heb. 11: 1, R. V.). Covet hope, which maketh not ashamed (Rom. 5: 5). Covet love, which seeketh not her own and never faileth (1 Cor. 13: 5-8). Covet peace, which passeth all understanding, and garrisons the heart and mind (Phil. 4: 6, 7). Covet power over all the power of the enemy (Luke 10: 19).

See sin's retribution. Ahab and Jezebel managed to a wish their accursed plot. The murderers paced their blood-stained inheritance without fear of challenge or discovery. But God maketh inquisition for blood. Their time for retribution came. As we behold the mutilated remains of that once proud, unscrupulous queen, lying in the common receptacle of offal and carrion outside the city, her blood sprinkling the walls; as we behold the partner of guilt, weltering in his blood, and the wild dogs licking the crimson drops from the wheels of his chariot and the plates of his armor—have we not before us a solemn and awful comment on the words of him who judgeth righteous judgment? Retribution sooner or later overtakes the defiant transgressor.

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—One sin leads to another.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

AHAB—GREEDY

JEZEHEL—CRUEL

ELIJAH—FAITHFUL

The connection. It is always important to trace the connection between successive lessons. The Ahab, Jezebel and Elijah of the last lesson are the Ahab, Jezebel and Elijah of this. Note briefly how Elijah appeared in the lesson of a week ago. Group a few practical lessons about the question, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" such as, God's right to direct us, his right to our service, his protecting care and our duty to trust him. Give a brief account of Ahab's war with Benhadad and his failure to gain the full victory that he should have realized, by not utterly destroying his enemy. Teach the danger of allowing one sin in the life. The present lesson illustrates the truth that one sin does not live long alone. Others come trooping along until there is a numerous brood.

Ahab was greedy. Let it be made clear that Ahab had great possessions. He was king over the ten tribes of Israel. He had a palace at Samaria, the capital, and another at Jezreel. Tell the story of his desire for Naboth's vineyard. Explain why it was not proper for Naboth to part with it. Some one has said that covetousness is like a thirsty man drinking the salt water of the sea. He drinks but is not satisfied and wants more. The more he drinks, the less satisfied he is. Another thought to be impressed here is the folly and sin of becoming sulky when one does not obtain what he wants. Give a word picture of Ahab, a full-grown man, pouting, going to bed, turning his face to the wall and refusing to eat because the owner of a piece of land he wanted would not sell it to him. The children of the class will not wish to tell you that they sometimes sulk, even if they are guilty, so do not ask them. You can teach the truth here involved without embarrassing them.

Jezebel was cruel. Write Jezebel's name on the board or on a tablet and under it write the evil things she did in getting for Ahab the vineyard he wanted, remembering that she did them because he coveted Naboth's vineyard, also keeping in mind that Ahab was as guilty as his wife. He let her do for him what he shrank from doing for himself. We are responsible for what we desire or allow others to do for us. In the list you make will be lying, perjury and murder.

Elijah was faithful. Describe vividly the meeting between Elijah and Ahab. Note the motives that each had in going to Naboth's vineyard. Recall their former meetings and the messages the prophet brought to the king. The evidence that Ahab had a guilty conscience was the fact that he asked the question, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" Study the evidences that children sometimes give that they have guilty consciences. Note that Elijah was faithful to reprove Ahab and Jezebel for their long series of wicked deeds, and pronounced a fearful sentence upon them. One sin led to another until the Lord sent death to them and their children as a punishment.

LESSON X

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Feb. 27.—Ahaziah and the prophet.—2 Kings 1: 1-18. Tu.—Elijah's translation.—2 Kings 2: 1-12. Wed.—Search for Elijah's body.—2 Kings 2: 13-18. Th.—Enoch.—Gen. 5: 21-24; Heb. 11: 1-6. Fr.—Redeemed from death.—Psa. 49: 1-15. Sat.—I will fear no evil.—Psa. 23: 1-6. Su.—A building of God.—2 Cor. 5: 1-10.

ELIJAH GOES UP BY A WHIRLWIND INTO HEAVEN.—2 Kings 2: 1-18. Print 2: 1-11.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 11, 12)

SUPT.—1 And it came to pass, when the Lord would take up E-li-jah into heaven by a whirlwind, that E-li-jah went with E-li'sha from Gil-gal.

School.—2 And E-li-jah said unto E-li'sha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me to Beth'-el. And E-li'sha said unto him, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Beth'-el.

3 And the sons of the prophets that were at Beth'-el came forth to E-li'sha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace.

4 And E-li-jah said unto him, E-li'sha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me to Jer'i-cho. And he said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jer'i-cho.

5 And the sons of the prophets that were at Jer'i-cho came to E-li'sha and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace.

6 And E-li-jah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the Lord hath sent me to Jor'dan. And he said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on.

7 And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jor'dan.

8 And E-li-jah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.

9 And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that E-li-jah said unto E-li'sha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And E-li'sha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.

10 And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.

11 And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and E-li-jah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

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*AMERICAN REVISION

1 And it came to pass, when Jehovah would take up Elijah by a whirlwind into heaven, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. 2 And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for Jehovah hath sent me as far as Beth-el. And Elisha said, As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Beth-el. 3 And the sons of the prophets that were at Beth-el came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that Jehovah will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. 4 And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for Jehovah hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho. 5 And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came near to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that Jehovah will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. 6 And Elijah said unto him, Tarry here, I pray thee; for Jehovah hath sent me to the Jordan. And he said, As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on. 7 And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood over against them afar off; and they two stood by the Jordan. 8 And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground. 9 And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I am taken from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. 10 And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. 11 And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him. Gen. 5: 24.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—We may be faithful to the end.

TOPIC.—God's disposition of men.

OUTLINE.—I. Elijah's departure at hand. II. Elisha's request. III. Elijah's translation.

TIME.—About B. C. 890.

PLACES.—Gilgal; Bethel; Jericho; the Jordan River and some point east of it from which Elijah was taken up.

READ.—2 Kings 1, 2.

INTRODUCTION.—We have little record of the life of Elijah during the ten years which elapsed between the incident of Naboth's vineyard and the prophet's translation. During this time Ahab, the king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, joined together to wage war against the king of Syria, and although Ahab took special precautions for his own safety he was slain in battle. To Ahab's son, Ahaziah, who succeeded him on the throne, Elijah was sent with a message, because the king had sent to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron instead of the God of Israel. Ahaziah was angered at the prophet because of his message and sent a company of fifty men to seize him, but Elijah called

down fire from heaven to destroy them. A second captain with fifty men was sent and met a like fate. A third company was sent, but as the captain humbled himself and pleaded for his life and the life of his men, they were spared and Elijah went with them to the king and repeated to him the message. See 2 Kings 1: 2-17. The prophet is mentioned in 2 Chron. 21: 12 as sending a letter of warning to Jehoram, king of Judah. The translation of Elijah is one of the most sublime events of which we have any record. "To study and appreciate the closing scenes in the history of this great man is to tread on holy ground. The ascension of Elijah has ever been regarded as typical of the ascension of our Lord."—Whedon. The patriarchal age, the Mosaic age and the Christian age have each one instance of ascension to heaven from a state of full life and vigor. Of Enoch's translation little is recorded, of Elijah's we have more, and of Christ's ascension we have full accounts. The translation of Elijah has instructed and inspired God's people through the intervening centuries, and it stands forth as the most remarkable of Old Testament miracles.

COMMENTARY.—I. ELIJAH'S DEPARTURE AT HAND (vs. 1-8). 1. when the Lord would take up Elijah.—The prophet's life-work was drawing to a close, and he was to enter upon his eternal reward. The events of that particular day indicate that he was still vigorous and capable of further

labor. It is clear that there was still work to be done, but God's purpose called for the removal of his servant from earthly scenes. The question why God's workmen are removed to heaven in the midst of successful labor must remain unanswered until we shall know as we are known. **into heaven**—Into the eternal dwelling-place of the saints. **whirlwind**—A tempest. **from Gilgal**—In the hill country of Ephraim eight or nine miles northwest of Bethel. We learn from 2 Kings 4: 38 that there was a school of the prophets here. Elisha had been associated with Elijah for several years, in fact, since the return of the latter from Horeb.

2. tarry here—Both Elijah and Elisha knew that the former was to be translated that day. Elijah desired to be alone when he went to heaven. Several reasons have been presented why Elijah requested Elisha to tarry at Gilgal. 1. His humility led him to avoid publicity while that great honor was being bestowed. 2. His love for solitude asserted itself in view of this, the most momentous event in his life. 3. He wished to spare Elisha the sight of his departure from earth. 4. He desired to test Elisha's devotion to him and to the work in which he was engaged. The first and the last of these views seem the most reasonable. **to Beth-el**—Where there was another school of the prophets. **as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth**—The two phrases, confirming the statement by the two supreme truths of all knowledge, the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, are often found singly, but seldom together,—besides this passage, only in 1 Sam. 20: 3; 25: 26.—*Peloubet*. This double oath expresses the strongest possible affirmation. **I will not leave thee**—The Lord had not told Elisha to tarry, and his devotion to his master and his interest in the prophetic office led to this persistency.

3. knowest thou—The "sons of the prophets" knew what the day would bring forth, probably by a direct revelation to them, for it is not likely that Elijah had told them of his approaching departure. **from thy head**—Recognizing that Elijah was the chief of the prophets, they must have considered it a serious thing for him to be removed when the worship and service of the God of Israel were greatly neglected and idolatry was prevalent. The phrase, "from thy head," has also been explained as having reference to the relative position of master and pupils, the teacher occupying a platform elevated to the level of the pupils' heads. **yea, I know it; hold ye your peace**—This knowledge brought with it a sadness and a sense of the responsibility that must rest upon him, that made him feel that the subject was too sacred for discussion. **4. Jericho**—About twelve miles southeast of Bethel in the valley of the Jordan. Here also was a school of the prophets. These schools were places where young men were trained, under the direction of a recognized prophet, for religious service. They were not necessarily the sons of prophets. Their study was principally the law of Moses. Elijah was evidently making a farewell visit to the "sons of the prophets" at Gilgal, Bethel and Jericho. **6. the Lord hath sent me to Jordan**—The journey was toward the place from which he was to be taken up to heaven. It led from Gilgal to Bethel, to Jericho, to Jordan, and beyond. Elisha proved his devotion and fidelity by not allowing himself to be separated from Elijah.

7. fifty men....stood to view afar off—There was intense interest in what was soon to take place. **stood by Jordan**—Evidently it was not at a fording-place. **8. Elijah took his mantle**—It was doubtless of undressed skin, and the symbol of his

office which he had worn for years. "The power of wonder-working rested not with the prophet individually, but was attached to his office, of which this rough garment was the badge."—*Edersheim*. **wrapped it**—Tightly round and round, as the word means, in the form of a staff.—*Macduff*. **smote the waters**—As if they were an enemy in his way. Elijah's mantle was to him at Jordan what the rod of God was to Moses at the Red Sea (Exod. 14: 16, 21); and many things in the lives of these two prophets who should meet Christ on the mount were parallel.—*Whe on*. **were divided**—"On the one side rushing hastily on; on the other, towering up like a wall of crystal."

11. ELISHA'S REQUEST (vs. 9, 10). 9. ask what I shall do for thee—If Elisha had yielded to Elijah's entreaty to tarry behind he would have missed this exalted favor. The request which Elisha would make would be a further index of his character. Solomon had been granted a similar privilege (1 Kings 3: 5). **before I be taken away from thee**—Elijah's departure had now become a subject of their conversation. **a double portion of thy spirit**—He did not ask for twice the amount of Elijah's spirit, but his request was for the portion falling to the first-born son under the Mosaic law. He was entitled to twice as much as any other child, so Elisha wished such a portion of his master's spirit that he might be equipped for the grave responsibilities which would soon fall upon him. Elisha showed his greatness of soul in this request.

10. a hard thing—Elijah had no power to impart his spirit to Elisha, for that power must come from God. Again, Elijah could not render Elisha capable of receiving it, for that spirit of devotion and faith must spring from Elisha's own heart. It was too hard a thing for Elijah to do but easy for God if Elisha would take the right stand. **if thou see me....it shall be so**—If he was able to retain to the end the same devoted perseverance, and keep his eye set and steadfast on the departing prophet, the gift would be his.—*Stanley*. Steadfastness and faith were essential to its attainment.

III. ELIJAH'S TRANSLATION (vs. 11-18). 11. as they still went on, and talked—Some think they approached Mt. Nebo, from which Moses viewed the land of Canaan. They were making their last journey together and holding their final conversation. **a chariot of fire, and horses of fire**—These were creations of the spiritual world. This heavenly scene was no hallucination, but the chariot and horses of fire were a part of that vast host, the sound of whose movements David once heard over the mulberry trees (2 Sam. 5: 24), and which at a later time filled the mountains round about Elisha (2 Kings 6: 17).—*Whedon*. **and parted them both asunder**—The parting time came, but it was accompanied by glorious displays of the divine presence and power. **went up by a whirlwind**—We do not read that Elijah was borne by the chariot and horses of fire, but by a whirlwind. The fiery chariot and horses may have been simply a convoy for the prophet in his flight to heaven. **12-18**. Elisha saw the marvelous spectacle, became the possessor of Elijah's mantle and by smiting the waters with it crossed the Jordan.

QUESTIONS.—About when was the time of this lesson? How long had it been since the events on Mt. Carmel? How were the schools of the prophets conducted? In what cities had such schools been established? Why did Elijah visit them at this time? What questions did the prophets ask Elisha? What was his answer? Why did Elisha refuse to leave Elijah? What request did Elisha make? Describe the translation of Elijah.

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. Elijah's connection with the schools of the prophets as their leader. 2. His experience with Ahaziah, king of Israel. 3. His letter to Jehoram, king of Judah (2 Chron. 21: 12). 4. A hasty review of Elijah's life. 5. His prominent characteristics.

II. THEME.—Faithful to the end.

III. ELIJAH'S LAST WORK.—1. God was nearly through with his servant on earth and Elijah knew it. 2. Trace his journey from Gilgal to the place of his translation. 3. The significance of his visits at Gilgal, Bethel and Jericho. 4. In view of his life and character we may imagine his feelings as he was completing his earthly work. A deep interest in the welfare of the nation. A concern for the "sons of the prophets." A desire that his successor should be equipped to carry forward the work in hand. 5. A miracle at the Jordan.

IV. ELIJAH'S LAST EARTHLY ASSOCIATE.—1. Elisha's call and service. 2. Elijah's desire to leave Elisha at various places did not arise from a lack of friendship between the two. 3. Various reasons may be suggested why Elijah repeatedly urged Elisha to remain behind. 4. Elisha's devotion. His persistency was not disobedience. 5. Elisha's request. (1) The privilege afforded him by Elijah. (2) The request. What it indicated. (3) Why a "hard thing." (4) Granted conditionally. 6. Elisha a witness to Elijah's flight from earth.

V. ELIJAH'S TRANSLATION.—1. The translation of Enoch. 2. The place of Elijah's translation not definitely known and it is not important that it should be. 3. His translation sudden. "As they still went on, and talked." Elisha's call came to him as he was at work. Elijah's translation took place as he was diligently engaged. 4. The display of divine glory. The fiery chariot and horses. 5. Elisha's exclamation. 6. The whirlwind flight to heaven. 7. Elijah's mantle and its subsequent use. 8. The vain search. 9. Elijah's translation a mighty miracle. 10. Typical of the resurrection of Christ. 11. Elijah's appearance with Moses and Christ at the Transfiguration. 12. Existence beyond the grave.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—God's disposition of men.

- I. Elijah translated to heaven.
- II. Elisha equipped for service.

I. Elijah translated to heaven. "God removes his workmen but carries on his work." He makes use of one instrumentality, then lays it aside for another, yet he never fails to honor them who honor him. Elijah's life was consumed in fiery zeal for the cause of the Lord. His last hours were consecrated to others. His translation was far from being indifferent, accidental or insignificant. It bore the same stamp as his temporal and earthly appearance and corresponded perfectly to his peculiar and unparalleled position in the divine economy of salvation. He had broken the strength of apostasy in Israel, had fought with fiery zeal against idolatry and laid anew the foundation of the law and the covenant. He was a true prophet of a turbulent period in a disorganized state. He was a hero in an heroic age. In his public life he was a fire to consume rather than to comfort. In his more retired life he was an enlightening and comforting light, so that in the evening of his life there were schools of prophets in the same places where the calf and Baal had their principal seats. By these schools God graciously made up in Israel for the

absence of priests and Levites, and the temple services which were held in Judah. Elijah's great solicitude was that those young men should hand down the religion of the true God to men of coming generations. His spirit of genuine religion embraced the spiritual interests of the race. It was those schools with Elisha at their head that were to retain and perpetuate Elijah's influence after he was gone.

II. Elisha equipped for service. Of all the prophetic company Elisha alone was permitted to accompany his master. It was no vain curiosity which prompted him to go, but a wish to see the glorious consummation of a career that had already received so much honor. The questions asked by the "sons of the prophets" were a thoughtless intrusion on Elisha's grief, an unintentional probing of his keen emotions. He would not allow them to interrupt the composure of Elijah's mind at that solemn season by any lamentations or public notice of the coming event. He would remind them that the deepest experiences of life are to be meditated upon rather than spoken of. When Elisha had stood the test of his unchangeable fidelity and perseverance he was not slow to make request of Elijah at his parting interview. In view of his position as the successor of Elijah his request took the form of a prayer for spiritual endowment for his great office. As a token of the different state into which the prophet entered and the change which took place he dropped his mantle. The double portion for which Elisha asked was not twice Elijah's power and inspiration but an elder son's portion, which was twice that inherited by the younger sons. The same spirit in which Elijah worked, chiefly to destroy and condemn, was to work in Elisha to cultivate and preserve. The spirit of Elijah was a spirit of fidelity to duty, a spirit of faithfulness in rebuking sin, a spirit of fearlessness and courage in the presence of opposition and danger and at the same time also a spirit of tenderness and love. When the final moment came Elisha was overwhelmed with the sense of his loss, yet he did not forget what the entire people had lost in Elijah, while he thought of what his master had been to him. He was reminded that new conditions of life must be considered as well as memories of the past. He must show his regard for Elijah and his work by carrying forward and improving what he had begun. First he made use of Elijah's mantle as Elijah had done to signify that he designed to keep to his master's methods. The "sons of the prophets" could not comprehend the operations of infinite power. They likely thought if Elijah was taken from them his soul alone went to heaven and that his body might be found and buried with due honor. One result of their search would be to set aside doubt and confirm Elisha in his position of authority. The divine presence was manifest not only to Elisha but to the "sons of the prophets."

T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

IS THE LORD GOD OF ELIJAH IN OUR CHURCHES TO-DAY?	WHERE IS THE LORD GOD OF ELIJAH?	ELISHA'S CHOICE WAS WISE.
IS HE IN OUR HOMES?		IT WAS BETTER THAN HONOR WEALTH OR POWER.
IS CHRIST IN OUR HEARTS?		LET US SEEK THE ENJOYMENT OF POWER.

Practical Applications

"The Lord would take up Elijah" (v. 1). Elijah going up by a whirlwind into heaven (v. 11) is suggestive of a company of people who shall be caught up to meet the Lord (1 Thess. 4: 14-17).

"Tarry here, I pray thee" (v. 2). He bids Elisha tarry at Bethel, Jericho and Jordan. He makes no reference to the honor waiting him as he meets the "sons of the prophets;" he sounds no trumpet; he gathers no company to witness his wonderful, unusual departure. He would be nothing that God might be everything. He would be only a dark shadow to set off the divine glory.

"As thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee" (vs. 2, 4, 6). Be kind to the living. They may be gone to-morrow. Elisha had no regrets as Elijah ascended. His love had been faithful; it could not be turned aside by entreaty. It was strong to the end. A three-year-old baby lingered beside the fresh made grave of a dearly loved grandfather. She seemed somehow to comprehend that her ministries to him were ended. She smoothed the newly laid turf with her tiny fingers and murmured, "I wish I'd brought grandpa's slippers oftener." Here is profound philosophy for older minds. Too often the strong, cultured soul is seen weeping at the grave of buried opportunity. There has not been lacking the garb of a servant, the profession of loyalty; but the fears of failure, the whispers of pride, the preoccupations of pleasure, the absorbing interests of congenial pursuits obtrude and the slippers are not carried to weary feet.

"Elijah said... Ask what I shall do for thee" (v. 9). "Ask" is a word intimately connected with blessing, present and future. We are told to ask of God (James 1: 5); ask in prayer, believing (Matt. 21: 22); ask of things to come (Isa. 45: 11; John 16: 13). Six times in his last words to his disciples Jesus tells them to "ask" (John 14: 13, 14; 15: 7, 16; 16: 23, 24). And concerning the Spirit, he said, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11: 13). A little girl lay dying. "Papa, dear papa," she said, as she looked up into the distressed face of her father. The tone told how she tried to comfort him. After a little she said, gently, "Papa." "What, my dear?" The answer came faint and broken, "How much do I cost you every year?" "Hush, dear, be quiet," he replied, in great agitation, thinking she was delicious. "But, please, papa, how much do I cost you?" To soothe her he replied, "Well, dearest, perhaps two or three hundred dollars. What then, darling?" "Because, papa, I thought maybe you would lay it out this year in Bibles for poor children to remember me by." With a bursting heart, her father replied, "I will do it every year so long as I live; and thus my Lillian shall yet speak and draw hundreds and thousands after her to heaven."

"Elisha said... let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me" (v. 9). Elisha asked to be the heir and successor of Elijah, with authority to continue the work the great prophet was to leave. McNeill says: "Elisha did not ask for Elijah's staff or a lock of his hair or some poor, stupid relic." It is better to ask for the eldest son's portion, the Holy Spirit, which will send you out to sacrifice the clothing and jewelry that have belonged to your departed, and make you a blessing to those more sorely bereft than you. After having asked, expect the power of the Holy Spirit, the anointing that abideth.

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—There is a home in heaven for those who are faithful here.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

The last work
The last associate
The last view } Of Elijah

FAITHFUL UNTIL DEATH

Beginning the lesson. Since we come to-day to the close of Elijah's earthly life, it will be well to call out briefly by questions the main events that have been studied. Have the children try to think, without speaking, of some one thing that they remember about him. After each has had time to try to recall one, ask them individually what they have thought of. A few words on each event will cover the ground in an interesting manner. These will include his three appearances to Ahab, his stay at Cherith and at Zarephath, with the raising of the widow's son, the victory at Carmel, the run to Jezreel, the flight to Horeb, and the calling of Elisha. Tell of some of Elijah's good qualities which will appeal to the children. His courage, his fidelity and his faith will be readily grasped by them.

Elijah's last work. At one time John Wesley was asked what he would do if he knew that he was to die that night. His reply was that he would do just as he had planned, and would retire as usual to wake up in glory. Explain to the class that Elijah knew that he was to be taken to heaven that day, and that he was at the head of at least three schools where young men were trained for religious work. The prophet visited each place where the "sons of the prophets" were, for the last time on that day. It was a sad day for those young men as they saw their leader for the last time. Impress upon the children the thought that we have each work to do, and that we ought to attend to it each day as it comes to us. If Elijah had been neglectful he would have missed the great honor that was bestowed upon him in his translation. Your class should be made to feel the necessity of giving themselves to the Lord early, even now.

Elijah's last words with Elisha. Tell how Elisha had been with Elijah for several years getting ready to take up Elijah's work after that prophet should go away to heaven. Explain Elisha's determination to stay with Elijah until the end. As Elisha clung to his master so we should cling to Christ. If you have time tell briefly the story of Ruth and Naomi. Place emphasis upon the request that Elisha made. It was not a selfish desire, for Elisha wanted a large measure of his master's spirit that he might do the work which lay before him. Elisha's devotion gained his desire. Speak of his receiving Elijah's mantle and what he did with it.

Elijah's farewell to earth. Picture the scene of Elijah's translation. He and Elisha were walking and talking together when suddenly the chariot and horses of fire appeared and separated the two prophets. Refer to Elisha who was taken to heaven without dying. Although the chariot and horses of fire were there the record says that Elijah was taken to heaven by a whirlwind. Tell the story of the fifty men who searched for the prophet after he was taken up. Impress the duty of being always ready to meet the Lord.

LESSON XI

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Mar. 6.—Sense of obligation.—2 Kings 4:8-16. Tu.—Child restored.—2 Kings 4:17-37. Wed.—Healing the waters.—2 Kings 2:19-22. Th.—Defeat of the Moabites.—2 Kings 3:1-27. Fr.—Aiding a widow.—2 Kings 4:1-7. Sat.—A multitude fed.—2 Kings 4:38-44. Su.—Restoring a maid.—Mark 5:21-24, 35-43.

ELISHA THE PROPHET RESTORES A CHILD TO LIFE.—2 Kings 4: 8-37.**Print 4: 25-37.**

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 32-35)

SUPT.—25 So she went and came unto the man of God to mount Carmel. And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Ge-ha'zi his servant, Behold, yonder is that Shu-nam'mite:

SCHOOL.—26 Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well.

27 And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet: but Ge-ha'zi came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her: and the Lord hath hid it from me and hath not told me.

28 Then she said, Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me?

29 Then he said to Ge-ha'zi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again: and lay my staff upon the face of the child.

30 And the mother of the child said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose, and followed her.

31 And Ge-ha'zi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but there was neither voice, nor hearing. Wherefore he went again to meet him, and told him, saying, The child is not awaked.

32 And when E-li'sha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed.

33 He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord.

34 And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm.

35 Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.

36 And he called Ge-ha'zi, and said, Call this Shu-nam'mite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said Take up thy son.

37 Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.

*AMERICAN REVISION

25 So she went, and came unto the man of God to mount Carmel.

And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Gehazi his servant, Behold, yonder is the Shunammite: 26 Run, I pray thee, now to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well. 27 And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught hold of his feet. And Gehazi came near to thrust her away; but the man of God said, Let her alone: for her soul is vexed within her; and Jehovah hath hid it from me, and hath not told me. 28 Then she said, Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me? 29 Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thy hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again; and lay my staff upon the face of the child. 30 And the mother of the child said, As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose, and followed her. 31 And Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but there was neither voice, nor hearing. Wherefore he returned to meet him, and told him, saying, The child is not awaked.

32 And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed. 33 He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto Jehovah. 34 And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon him; and the flesh of the child waxed warm. 35 Then he returned, and walked in the house once to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. 36 And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son. 37 Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground; and she took up her son, and went out.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? SCHOOL.—The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Rom. 6:23.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—There is great benefit in going to the Lord in times of sorrow.

TOPIC.—Events in Elisha's ministry.

OUTLINE.—I. Elisha at Shunem. II. Sorrow in the home. III. The appeal to Elisha. IV. The child's life restored.

TIME.—From about B. C. 890 to 884.

PLACES.—Shunem, three miles north of Jezreel; Mount Carmel.

READ.—Luke 7:11-17.

INTRODUCTION.—Since recent lessons have contained references to Elisha, we do not now need a particular introduction to him. Through his association with Elijah he became acquainted with the duties of his office and the conditions prevailing in the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. While the two prophets stood successively in the same relation to Israel, they were very different in their natures. Elijah was a rugged son of the wilderness, bold and self-denying. Elisha

was less abrupt and stern in his manner, yet as faithful and devoted to the cause of Jehovah as was his illustrious predecessor. By Elisha's hand several miracles were wrought, but by Elisha's twice as many. In the records of those wrought by Elisha it is probable that strict attention is not given to chronological order. Several miracles are recorded before that which forms the lesson to-day. We have the dividing of the Jordan, the healing of the waters of Jericho, the destruction of the mocking children, the supply of water for the armies contending against the Moabites and the increasing of the widow's oil.

COMMENTARY.—I. ELISHA AT SHUNEM (vs. 8-17). Elisha's work called him to visit various parts of the kingdom. He was constantly engaged in the religious interests of the nation, one of his important labors being to care for the different schools of the prophets. On his journeys he frequently passed through Shunem, the modern Sulam, in the rich, wheat-growing plain of Esdraelon, within sight of Mount Carmel, seven miles from Nazareth of New Testament times. The hospitable

and wealthy family mentioned in vs. 8, 9, made comfortable provisions for the entertainment of the prophet, fitting up a room with a bed, a seat, a table and a light, all that was essential to his comfort. Whenever he saw fit to occupy the room it was at his disposal. So great was Elisha's appreciation of the kindness shown him that he offered to ask a favor for the family from the king or the head of the army, but the woman of Shunem was contented and desired that no request be made. Upon asking his servant, Gehazi, what could be done in return for all the favors shown by the family, the suggestion was made that the family was childless, which was considered by Orientals to be a grave misfortune. The prophet therefore predicted that in a year a son would bless their home, and the prophecy was fulfilled.

II. **SORROW IN THE HOME** (vs. 18-24). When the child was perhaps six or seven years old he found his way to the harvest-field where his father and his men were at work, and was suddenly taken sick, suffering no doubt from sun-stroke, for Thomson says, "I know by experience that this country glows like a furnace in harvest time." Being taken to his mother by a servant, he was held in her lap until he died. This child of promise, who had been the joy and light of the home since his birth, was dead and the affliction seemed mysterious. As if there might be virtue in the prophet's room to restore life, the anxious mother placed her dead child upon the bed there. Without telling her husband of the boy's death she hastened toward Mount Carmel where she hoped to find Elisha and acquaint him with the calamity which had befallen her home. Mounting the beast of burden she gave direction to the servant, who walked or ran behind the animal as the driver, not to slacken his speed except at her command, as if she believed that the restoration of the child's life depended upon her presentation of her affliction to the prophet at the earliest possible moment.

III. **THE APPEAL TO ELISHA** (vs. 25-31). **25. the man of God**—Elisha is called by this title repeatedly. He spoke the words of the Lord to men. He was filled with the Spirit of God and was directed by him. **to mount Carmel**—A distance of sixteen miles from her home. **saw her afar off**—From the hill overlooking the valley he could see her at a distance. **that Shunammite**—His frequent sojourns at the home in his journeys had resulted in an acquaintance with her so that he could quickly recognize her. **26. run now**—As it was "neither new moon, nor sabbath" (v. 23), the prophet knew that some important matter had brought her to Carmel. The sending forward of his servant to greet her was an act of courtesy on his part. **is it well**—The question was the proper form of greeting, and the inquiry after the welfare of each member of the family showed his kindly interest in them. **it is well**—In the Hebrew only the word "peace" is used. "If in the East you ask after a person whom you know to be ill the reply will invariably be, 'Well, thank God,' even when the very next sentence is to inform you that he is dying."—*Thomson*. The woman simply returned Gehazi's greeting and moved forward to greet the prophet. **27. caught him by the feet**—It is an every-day occurrence in the East for one who desires a favor of another to fall down and grasp his feet. Thomson says, "I have had this done to me often before I could prevent it." **thrust her away**—Gehazi in his mistaken idea of the case sought to protect his master from her annoying entreaties. **let her alone**—Elisha's knowledge of the woman convinced him that her need was great,

and he was ready to entertain her request. **her soul is vexed**—Her grief moved the prophet to sympathy. Hurlbut says, "Cultivate the Christ-like talent of discerning the sorrows of others." **the Lord hath hid it from me**—While Elisha was a prophet, he could not foresee the future nor grasp knowledge by supernatural means only as the Lord revealed it to him.

28. did I desire a son—The Shunammite had not made such a request, but the gift of a child was most pleasing to her. She could not understand why the gift should have been bestowed only to be snatched away from her. **do not deceive**—Do not mock me by giving me a son to be quickly torn from my embrace. No word had been passed that the child was dead, yet the prophet apprehended it from what the distressed mother said. **29. gird up thy loins**—Gather thy garment in thy girdle so as to be able to run more freely. **take my staff**—The staff was the symbol of his office as prophet. **salute him not**—Much time was consumed in the East in that age, as is also the case to-day, in greetings. The case was an urgent one and there must be no delay. **lay my staff upon the face of the child**—With the thought that by this means the child might be restored. **30. as the Lord liveth, etc.**—This was the strongest kind of affirmation. **I will not leave thee**—She evidently had no faith that Gehazi's act of laying the prophet's staff upon the child's face would be of any avail in restoring her child. Her need was deep and her persistency was great, so there was nothing for Elisha to do but to go to Shunem.

IV. **THE CHILD'S LIFE RESTORED** (vs. 32-37). **32. the child was dead**—Even if Elisha had thought the child was alive, though apparently dead, he was convinced that death had really taken place, and that his efforts through Gehazi had not availed. **33. shut the door**—That his access to God might be the most free. **prayed unto the Lord**—To know his will and to receive the necessary manifestations of his power. **34. lay upon the child**—This was to convey his own animal warmth to the dead child. **35. walked... to and fro**—His own animal heat might have become much reduced by absorption into the cold body of the child. **Terrv, the child sneezed seven times**—When the nervous influence began to act on the muscular system sneezing would be a natural consequence. **Clarke**. This showed that respiration was being restored. **opened his eyes**—This was the third sign mentioned of returning life, the first being that the body grew warm and the second the act of sneezing. **36. take up thy son**—Joyfully the child was returned alive to his mother. See the power of prayer; as it has the key of the clouds, so it has the key of death. See the power of faith; that fixed law of nature, death, shall be dispensed with rather than this believing woman be disappointed. **Com. Com.** **37. fell at his feet**—In overwhelming gratitude. When God has done great things for us, we should bow humbly and say, "Lord, I am not worthy." **QUESTIONS**.—Where was Shunem? What did a woman of Shunem do for the comfort of Elisha and his servant? How was she rewarded for her kindness? What great affliction came to her home? What did the woman do? What was Elisha's distinctive title? What did the woman do when she came to Elisha? What did Elisha tell Gehazi to do? Why was this? Why did the woman refuse to leave Elisha? What did Elisha do when he reached the dead child? Why did he stretch himself upon the child? What were the signs of returning life? By what power was the child's life restored?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. Our study changes from the subject of Elijah to Elisha. 2. The similarity and dissimilarity of the two men. 3. The miracles wrought by the hand of Elijah. 4. Miracles of Elisha recorded previously to this lesson. 5. The story of the Shunammite shows that persistent application to the right source will bring relief from trouble.

II. THEME.—God is the source of all life.

III. ELISHA AT SHUNEM.—1. The location of Shunem relatively to Carmel. 2. The work of Elisha. (1) Giving religious instruction to the people. (2) Having an oversight of the schools of the prophets. 3. His journeys throughout the kingdom. 4. Entertainment for himself and his servant at Shunem. 5. An attempt to repay the family for their kindness to him. 6. The woman at Shunem. (1) Hospitable. (2) Contented. 7. The joy that came into the home. 8. As the prophet was cared for, so the Lord supplies the needs of those whom he calls to give their time to his service.

IV. A WOMAN'S SORROW.—1. What it means for death to enter a home. 2. The age of the child when stricken. 3. The time of year and weather conditions. 4. The suddenness of the illness and the speedy death. 5. Reason for placing the child in the prophet's room. (1) The mother was impressed with the prophet's piety. (2) The child was given according to the prediction of Elisha. (3) She believed that he had power with God. 6. The Christian should so live that others will have confidence in his piety. 7. The woman's hasty journey.

V. AN EFFECTUAL APPEAL.—1. She acted promptly upon the best light she had. 2. Her need was deep and urgent. 3. The approach to Carmel. 4. The significance of Gehazi's greeting and her reply. 5. Her grief understood by Elisha. 6. Gehazi's lack of knowledge and sympathy. 7. The errand upon which the servant was sent. The outcome. 8. The woman's intense persistency. (1) The oath. (2) The prophet moved to follow her to Shunem. 9. Elisha's course in securing the restoration of the child. (1) Prayer. (2) The human means employed. 10. Restoration in this case was a gradual process. 11. The efficacy of Elisha's prayer. 12. Spiritual life can be secured only from God.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Events in Elisha's ministry.

I. Elisha receiving hospitality.


II. Events in the Shunammite's home.

I. Elisha receiving hospitality. The home in Shunem was as a tabernacle of God among men, for there dwelt faith and love, therefore peace and blessing also. The consecrated use of wealth was the true secret of obtaining joy out of it. The Shunammite was a woman of great thought, practical faith and heroic patience, and to Elisha she extended the free hospitality of her home. "This is an holy man of God." These words were a testimony to the character of Elisha. His works among the people were specimens of his beneficent ministry. They afford an insight into the condition of the people and their home-life during the troublous times in Israel. It was Elisha's custom to canvass the country to arouse and instruct the people. He was the foremost subject in the kingdom and was consulted by kings, yet he accepted no place of preferment at court but gave himself to the work of the schools and visitation among the people. His life and miracles were like the "still small voice" that

followed the whirlwind, the earthquake and the fire of Elijah's ministry. Upon his acceptance of such generous hospitality he sought to be of some service to the family, especially in spiritual life. Elisha's question to the Shunammite served as a test to determine whether she had received him in the name of a prophet and not for the sake of reward or for any temporal gain. Her reply gave evidence of great humility and modesty. Elisha therefore used his interest for her in the court of heaven rather than of earth, which was far better. God built up her family in reward for her kindness in building the prophet a room to dwell in. The child became very dear to Elisha as the son of his prayers and very dear to his parents as the son of their old age. We here turn more naturally to the history of the Shunammite than to the incident of Elisha's entertainment, and yet one depends upon the other. God's hand was upon both for good. There was a lesson for each, needed in some particular feature of their life mission.

II. Events in the Shunammite's home. To perfect the faith of that mother through trial the gift was for a time withdrawn. There was danger of forgetting that the gift still hung on the will of the Giver. How frequently it happens that from our greatest blessings our greatest trials come. A child of promise, a child of prayer, and given in love, yet taken away! From the manner in which the child had been given, God might seem pledged to preserve him from the ordinary dangers of childhood. The real mission of her sorrow was to deepen her knowledge of God, for he it is who sets the days of adversity over against the days of prosperity. There is some cloud on every lands ape, yet the Lord will not abandon in days of adversity those who trust him in days of prosperity. The woman of Shunem showed all the faith and strength and wisdom of her character. She lost her son but not her faith. She made no preparation for burial but for resurrection. A great mystery hung over that bereavement, and as only the prophet could solve that mystery the mother made haste to go to him. How wonderfully did that prudent, pious mother guard her lips under her deep affliction. There is a silence which is often more eloquent than speech. Her faith in God showed itself in action. As the blessing had come through Elisha it was fitting that the restoration also should come through him. The mother appealed to the promise of the prophet that she should "embrace a son" and based her petition upon it. Only the truly pious did that mother care to unburden her heart. The defects in Gehazi's own spiritual nature proved too serious for the work assigned him. A prophet's staff required a prophet's hand to use it. Being wrong in his relation to God, Gehazi was wrong in his relation to sacred work. Faith and fervency characterized Elisha's prayer. Prayer is helplessness casting itself upon power. That mother's heaviest affliction made way for her sweetest consolation. T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

<p>THE SHUNAMMITE'S FAITH WAS INVINCIBLE.</p> <p>GOD ALWAYS HONORS SUCH FAITH.</p> <p>REVIVALS FOLLOW THE PRAYER OF FAITH.</p>		<p>THE GOSPEL HAS LIFE-GIVING POWER.</p> <p>FAITH NEVER ENDS IN DISAPPOINTMENT.</p> <p>BRING YOUR SINS AND SORROWS TO CHRIST.</p>
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Practical Applications

"That Shunammite" (v. 25). She was one of those "women" who, through faith, "received their dead raised to life again" (Heb. 11:35). She showed her faith by, 1. Making no preparation for the burial of her boy, but laying him on the bed of the man of God, and leaving him there alone (v. 21). 2. Telling no one of her son's death. 3. Answering the child's father when he questioned why she wished to go to Mount Carmel, seventeen miles away, "It shall be well" (v. 23). 4. Going to the man of God (v. 25). 5. Her quiet answer to Gehazi, "It is well" (v. 26). 6. Her appeal to Elisha (v. 28). 7. Her persistent desire that the prophet himself should come to the child (v. 30).

"I will not leave thee" (v. 30). Her ability to "perceive" (v. 9) that Elisha was a man of God, made her also quick to discern that Gehazi was not genuine and had no power to work a miracle. She could not afford to trust the urgent case in the hands of one in whom she had no confidence.

"The child is not awaked" (v. 31). "The child was dead" (v. 32). All failure springs from lack of faith. The mother had no faith in Gehazi, and no faith in the staff. Gehazi was not a man of faith. The staff of a prophet is useless without the spirit and power of a prophet. "In the realm of the miraculous, divine power ever works in harmony with sacred law. There must be a sympathetic union between the human agencies employed and those deeply concerned in a miracle." "Why could we not?" do you sometimes ask after you have seen some mighty manifestation of the power of God from some man of God? The one answer is, "Because of your little faith" (Matt. 17:20, R. V.).

"He went in . . . and prayed" (v. 33). Prayer equips us for a mighty conflict. The greatest have always prayed most. The chiefest apostle began and ended almost every epistle with a prayer. Luke tells us eight times how our great Exemplar prayed. At his baptism (Luke 3:21), in the midst of a busy life (5:16), before choosing the twelve (6:12, 13), before the Transfiguration (9:28), for the impetuous Peter (22:32), in the midst of his awful agony (22:41-46), for his murderers (23:34), and on the cross (23:46). Creative life and resurrection life came in answer to Elisha's prayer. He and Elisha were apparently the only two Old Testament prophets to whom was given power to raise the dead.

"He went up, and lay upon the child" (v. 34). Elisha prayed, but there was no sign of life. Then he laid his mouth on the child's mouth, and his eyes upon its eyes, and his hands upon its hands, as if he would pour his own life into the little inanimate body, but with no apparent result. Then he went away, and walking "once hither and once thither" (v. 35, margin), wrestled still for the life of the child. Back he came to the little chamber and once again laid himself upon the cold child, as if he would say, "Lord, I and this child are one; I will not leave the lad. He shall partake of life with me or I will share the grave with him. Wilt thou, Lord, that Elisha shall in the future walk upon earth—awaken this dead child, for I am dead with him. If thou leave him a prey to death, thou hast also slain thy servant; for I will not leave this corpse." God heard and victory came. The child opened his eyes and was given back to his mother.

"She . . . bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son and went out" (v. 37). "He that receiveth a prophet . . . shall receive a prophet's reward" (Matt. 10:41). To the Shunammite, in return for her kindness to the prophet, a son was first given and then restored to life.

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—God only can give life.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

Kindness { To God's servant
Repaid

A Child's { Death
Restoration

A PRAYER OF FAITH

Elijah and Elisha. Make a list on the board of the principal events in Elijah's life by way of review, and commence another list under the heading "Elisha." There will be several things to write under the latter. His call, his following Elijah, his sight of Elijah's translation, his receiving Elijah's mantle and his crossing the Jordan, will be enough for now. Call attention to Elisha's love for Elijah and his devotion to him.

Kindness to God's servant. Describe the work of Elisha as he went from place to place giving instruction to the people and directing the affairs of the schools of the prophets. Describe his passing through Shunem one day in his journey, and the kindness of the family in inviting him to share their hospitality. Tell about the fine room they built and furnished for the prophet so that he might have a lodging-place whenever he passed that way. Tell the story of the mission upon which Jesus sent his disciples and how they were to be provided for as they taught the people and healed the sick. Teach the children that they should have respect for those who are spending their time in preaching and in trying to lead people to the Lord.

Kindness repaid. Tell your class that the woman of Shunem did not show kindness to the prophet for the sake of any reward that might be given to her. She did it in the name of the Lord. There was no child in the home and in accordance with the prophet's prediction a son was given. This gift was more pleasing to those parents than any amount of money. They had honored the servant of the Lord and the Lord honored them. The Lord will also bless us in many ways if we will do our best for him and for his servants.

A child's death. Let the story of this young lad's death be told tenderly. We suppose him to have been six or seven years of age. Tell about the very hot sun of that climate in summer. The father was a farmer and lived where the land yielded large crops of grain and he was busy harvesting his wheat. How many of the children like to go with father when he is at work? Probably the child was overcome by the heat. He lived but a few hours. Tell how the poor mother placed her dead child in the prophet's room and hastened to Elisha. Relate a Bible story of a child's life being restored.

Life restored. Describe the meeting of the sorrowing mother and Elisha, her grief, her earnestness and the prophet's sympathy. Explain why she went to Elisha. Bring out the things that Elisha did to restore life to the child, placing large emphasis upon his praying to God. Note the signs of the restoration of life, and picture the home when the child was restored to his parents. Make much of the great truth that Jesus came to give us all spiritual life.

LESSON XII

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Mar. 13.—Defeat through drunkenness.—1 Kings 20:12-21. Tu.—Wine not for kings.—Prov. 31:1-9. Wed.—Into captivity.—Isa 5:1-23. Th.—Staggering with drink.—Isa. 28:1-13. Fr.—Wine takes away the heart.—Hos. 4:6-19. Sat.—The Nazarenes.—Amos 2:6-16. Su.—Wine in bowls.—Amos 6:1-6.

DEFEAT THROUGH DRUNKENNESS—Temperance Lesson.—1 Kings 20: 12-21.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verse 13)

SUPT.—12 And it came to pass, when Ben-hadad heard this message, as he was drinking, he and the kings in the pavilions, that he said unto his servants, Set yourselves in array. And they set themselves in array against the city.

School.—13 And, behold, there came a prophet unto A'hah, king of Is'ra-el, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold, I will deliver it into thine hand this day; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.

14 And A'hah said, By whom? And he said, Thus saith the Lord, Even by the young men of the princes of the provinces. Then he said, Who shall order the battle? And he answered, Thou.

15 Then he numbered the young men of the princes of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty two: and after them he numbered all the people, even all the children of Is'ra-el, being seven thousand.

16 And they went out at noon. But Ben-hadad was drinking himself drunk in the pavilions, he and the kings, the thirty and two kings that helped him.

17 And the young men of the princes of the provinces went out first; and Ben-hadad sent out, and they told him, saying, There are men come out of Samaria.

18 And he said, Whether they be come out for peace, take them alive; or whether they be come out for war, take them alive.

19 So these young men of the princes of the provinces came out of the city, and the army which followed them.

20 And they slew every one his man: and the Syr'i-ans fled; and Is'ra-el pursued them: and Ben-hadad the king of Syr'i-a escaped on a horse with the horsemen.

21 And the king of Is'ra-el went out, and smote the horses and chariots, and slew the Syr'i-ans with a great slaughter.

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*AMERICAN REVISION

12 And it came to pass, when Ben-hadad heard this message, as he was drinking, he and the kings, in the pavilions, that he said unto his servants, Set yourselves in array. And they set themselves in array against the city.

13 And, behold, a prophet came near unto Ahab, king of Israel, and said, Thus saith Jehovah, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold, I will deliver it into thy hand this day; and thou shalt know that I am Jehovah. 14 And Ahab said, By whom? And he said, Thus saith Jehovah, By the young men of the princes of the provinces. Then he said, Who shall begin the battle? And he answered, Thou. 15 Then he mustered the young men of the princes of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty-two; and after them he mustered all the people, even all the children of Israel, being seven thousand.

16 And they went out at noon. But Ben-hadad was drinking himself drunk in the pavilions, he and the kings, the thirty and two kings that helped him. 17 And the young men of the princes of the provinces went out first; and Ben-hadad sent out, and they told him, saying, There are men come out from Samaria. 18 And he said, Whether they are come out for peace, take them alive; or whether they are come out for war, take them alive. 19 So these went out of the city, the young men of the princes of the provinces, and the army which followed them. 20 And they slew every one his man; and the Syrians fled, and Israel pursued them: and Ben-hadad the king of Syria escaped on a horse with horsemen. 21 And the king of Israel went out, and smote the horses and chariots, and slew the Syrians with a great slaughter.

SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—It is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink. Prov. 31:4.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—Folly and weakness are results of the use of strong drink.

TOPIC.—Divine justice and mercy.

OUTLINE.—I. Benhadad's angry command. II. Israel's defiance encouraged. III. Drunken kings and their folly. IV. Israel's victory.

TIME.—About B. C. 900.

PLACE.—Samaria, the capital of Israel.

READ.—1 Kings 20.

INTRODUCTION.—As a result of the idolatry of Ahab and Jezebel and their persistent disregard of the law of God, not only did the nation become idolatrous and weak, but the heathen nation to the north, Syria, made inroads into Israel under Benhadad II. Benhadad I had wrested from Baasha certain cities of the northern part of Israel, and had even gained possession of certain streets in Samaria, Israel's capital (1 Kings 20:34). The Benhadad of the present lesson had made Israel tributary to himself, and to his haughty demands the weak and wicked Ahab was inclined to yield. The king of Syria had said to Ahab, "Thy silver and thy gold is mine; thy wives also and thy children, even the goodliest, are mine" (1 Kings 20:3), and Ahab assented to his demand; but Benhadad was not satisfied with that and sent word to Ahab that he would send his servants to search the houses of the king and his people and would carry away whatever of value they should desire. This demand was a little too arrogant for even the weak and cowardly Ahab to accept, and after

counseling with his officers sent word to Benhadad that he had accepted his first demands, but would not yield to the last. In reply to the boast of the king of Syria respecting the immense size of the army that would attack Samaria, Ahab gave utterance to the apt proverbial expression, "Let not him that girdeth on his armor boast himself as he that putteth it off" (1 Kings 20:11, R. V.). The events of this lesson, if presented in their chronological order, would fall between lessons eight and nine, but, that this narrative might be used as a temperance lesson and be studied immediately before the quarterly review, it is given the place it now occupies. The aptness of the story of Benhadad's defeat as a temperance lesson is unquestioned. The events described open up to us the entire subject of temperance.

COMMENTARY.—I. BENHADAD'S ANGRY COMMAND (v. 12). 12. Ben-hadad—The king of Syria, who reigned about thirty years and died B. C. 890. This was Benhadad II, son of Benhadad I. There was also a king of Syria known as Benhadad III, not a son of Benhadad II, but of Hazael. heard this message—The message mentioned in verse 11, in which Ahab intimated that the battle had not yet been fought. The Roman proverb says, "Sing not the triumphal song before the victory." In the Christian warfare, however, it is entirely appropriate to sing the song of triumph before the battle, as he was drinking—The Syrian king and his fellow kings were apparently unaware of any danger and were careless in their fancied se-

curity. Benhadad knew that Ahab's refusal to accede to all his demands would be likely to make him trouble, but he also knew the weakness of Israel in contrast to his great resources, and gave himself over to revelry. **in the pavilions**—War tents, covered either with canvas or with the boughs of trees.—*Whedon*. Such shelters are still constructed and occupied in certain parts of the East. **set yourselves in array**—The Syrian hosts were encamped near the city of Samaria, and at the answer received from Ahab, Benhadad, doubtless inflamed with wine, decided that the time had come to attack the city.

II. ISRAEL'S DEFIANCE ENCOURAGED (vs. 13-15).

13. there came a prophet unto Ahab—

Though the king and people of Israel had highly offended him, God had not utterly cast them off. He still cherished designs of mercy toward them, and here, though unasked gave them a signal proof of his interest in them, by a prophet's animating announcement that the Lord would that day deliver the mighty hosts of the enemy into his hands by means of a small, feeble, inadequate band.—*J. F. & B.* The prophet's name is not mentioned.

Whedon suggests that he was from one of the schools of the prophets, while Clarke thinks it might possibly have been either Elijah or Elisha in disguise. The latter view is unlikely, for there appears to be no reason why the identity of either of these should be concealed.

hast thou seen—Surely Ahab had seen the vast army of Syria and had been so terrified that he had consented to give himself, his family and his wealth to Benhadad that his life might be preserved. **I will deliver**—Over against the "great multitude" of the enemy was placed the promise of Jehovah.

this day—No greater good could well come to the besieged city. **thou shalt know that I am the Lord**—One more effort was to be made in mercy to bring Ahab to realize his wickedness in trusting in heathen deities and rejecting the God of Israel.

14. by whom—Ahab could see no way in which such a marvelous deliverance could be effected. His own forces were small and he expected no allies to come to his assistance.

the young men of the princes—These young men were the attendants of the chief officers of the different districts of the kingdom of Israel, and were in Samaria because of Benhadad's invasion.

who shall order the battle—For the time Ahab was apparently desirous of receiving help and direction from God. With an insignificant army, he thought there must be an extraordinary leader to insure success.

thou—Surely Ahab must have been humbled, in view of his past wickedness, to think that such a great commission should be entrusted to him. "Jehovah will show Ahab, and also Benhadad, that 'the battle is not to the strong,' and these two hundred thirty-two youths shall be mightier than the boasted numbers of the king of Syria."—*Whedon*.

15. seven thousand—This must have represented the total number of men in Samaria available for military duty. The number was insignificant in comparison with the hosts of Syria. The vastness of the Syrian army may be seen by the numbers slain in a subsequent battle (1 Kings 20: 29, 30).

III. DRUNKEN KINGS AND THEIR FOLLY (vs. 16-18).

16. they went—The two hundred thirty-two young men of the princes. It looked as if they were marching to their death as this handful of men went to face the Syrian host. **but**—A strong adversative. On the one side was the little band going forth under divine direction, and on the other a group of kings in command of immense forces in a drunken carousal. **drinking himself drunk**—

For kings to drink and for army officers to be drunken at any time, and especially on the eve of battle, is the height of folly. Alcohol is a conqueror. It conquers the general, the statesman, the professional man, the laborer, the business man, the man of wealth, the man in poverty, the man of intellectual power, the high, the low, the great, the small, all, it conquers all who tarry with it. In one of the countries of Europe, before an army undertakes a long march, or engages in battle, officers pass along the lines to examine the soldiers, and if the smell of liquor is found upon the breath of any man, he is sent back to the barracks as unfit for the service to be undertaken. One may become intoxicated and become sober again, but an injury has been done to the tissues of the brain and to other organs of the body from which he will never fully recover. **the kings, the thirty and two**—They were petty kings, who were tributary to Benhadad.

17. went out first—They went out of Samaria toward the Syrian camp, leading the way for the seven thousand who were to follow. **Ben-hadad sent out**—To learn the cause of the sally from the besieged city.

18. take them alive—Benhadad and his vassals and princes were already, at that early hour, scarcely mid-day, deep in their cups, and though informed of this advancing company, yet confiding in their numbers, or it may be, excited with wine, he ordered with indifference the proud intruders to be taken alive, whether they came with peaceful or hostile intentions.—*J. F. & B.* In the folly of his drunken insolence he was confident of victory, not dreaming of any power greater than his own.—*Whedon*. Even a king will do when drunk what he would not when sober.

IV. ISRAEL'S VICTORY (vs. 19-21).

19. these young men... and the army—The young men were to be the agents in turning the Syrian army to flight and the seven thousand were to pursue the fleeing host.

20. they slew every one his man—Not only was Benhadad's army unprepared for an attack, but the leaders were drunk, while the young men were fully alive to the work before them and had a definite purpose, which they accomplished.

the Syrians fled—An organized, systematic attack upon the leaderless Syrian multitude, panic-stricken by the unexpected assault, caused them to flee.

Israel pursued—The narration is vivid. There is a striking array of facts packed into this verse. On Israel's side was order, on Syria's disorder; on Israel's courage and faith, on Syria's dismay; on Israel's victory, on Syria's inglorious defeat.

Benhadad... escaped—The king's body-guard doubtless made unusual efforts to save the life of their master.

21. the king of Israel went—The marvelous deliverance inspired him with energy to make the victory as great as possible.

a great slaughter—The word of the Lord by his prophet had been fulfilled, and it was with the express purpose that the king might know that there was a God in Israel, yet there is no record that Ahab acknowledged him or in any way attributed his great victory to his power.

QUESTIONS.—Who was the king of Israel at this time? The king of Syria? What was the relation between the two nations? What demand did the king of Syria make upon the king of Israel? Who appeared to encourage Ahab? What was the strength of Israel's army as compared with that of Syria? Describe the battle and the victory? What wickedness and folly were in the Syrian camp? How did drunkenness affect the outcome of the battle? How does strong drink affect the body? The mind? The soul? Give your reasons why one should abstain from strong drink.

A Teaching Plan

I. **INTRODUCTORY.**—1. The events now studied lie between lessons 8 and 9, but are made the temperance lesson of the quarter. 2. The evils of the use of strong drink frequently mentioned in the scriptures. 3. Strong drink is an enemy to human progress. 4. It is as disastrous for kings to drink as for their subjects. 5. A long line of sins and calamities follows in the train of strong drink.

II. **THEME.**—Folly and disaster in strong drink.

III. **BENHADAD'S AMBITION.**—1. He already had power and standing among rulers. 2. The location, extent and wealth of his dominions. 3. His ambition for greater territory led him to seek it by conquest. 4. He regarded Ahab and the kingdom of Israel as his possession. 5. The army of Syria was encamped before Samaria. 6. The arrogant demands of Benhadad. 7. The thirst for power is conscienceless and unreasonable. 8. Ahab's refusal to submit to Benhadad's excessive demands, and the latter's boast. 9. Boasting rebuked by a proverb. See v. 11. 10. The first eleven verses of the chapter in which the lesson is found are essential to a proper understanding of the lesson.

IV. **BENHADAD'S FOLLY.**—1. Verses 12 and 16 declare the nature of the Syrian king's folly. 2. With him the folly lay (1) in the injury that a course of drunkenness would bring to him personally and (2) in the loss to his army and nation. 3. The foolish orders sent forth as stated in verses 12 and 18. 4. Strong drink had made him short-sighted and over-confident. 5. The deceptiveness of intoxicating liquors. They promise (1) health, (2) friends, (3) pleasure, only to give disease, desolation and despair. 6. Benhadad was drunk at the wrong time, at a critical moment. 7. No man can be drunk at the right time.

V. **BENHADAD'S DEFEAT.**—1. Two enemies helped to defeat Benhadad. (1) Strong drink, (2) The army of Israel. 2. The divine element in his defeat. (1) The prophet's message. (2) The Lord's promise. 3. God's purpose in the destruction of the Syrian army. 4. Ways in which strong drink brings defeat. (1) It defeats happiness in the home. (2) It tends to defeat peace and prosperity in the community. (3) It tends to defeat the objects of the Christian church. (4) It tends to defeat physical, intellectual and spiritual well-being.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Divine justice and mercy.

I. Exercised to protect national religion.

II. Exercised to destroy false religion.

I. **Exercised to protect national religion.** God sometimes makes one wicked man a scourge to another. The account of Benhadad's invasion and demands, Ahab's danger and distress, and Israel's victory, portray God's justice and mercy both to disobedient Israel and insolent, defiant Syria. Neither people nor rulers can neglect nor defy God with impunity. Disregard for his laws is sure to bring down his judgments. The sin of Israel at this time was idolatry. Justice demanded consequently that the people share in the punishment. In the invasion of the Syrian army we see the punishment of Israel and their king, Ahab. Though repelled, the invasion caused loss and suffering to the people. It was nothing short of a national calamity. Ahab and Jezebel were primarily responsible for the last great apostasy. They were the first to suffer and suffered most. Ahab suffered wretchedness and despair from the insolent messages of Benhadad. Jezebel had to face the

prospect of being handed over to the will of the brutal, sensual, drunken despot, Benhadad of Syria. Yet God designed that Ahab's punishment should come later and Benhadad's at once. Benhadad's boasting was punished while Ahab's was prevented that the excellency of the power might be of God. There was not the slightest evidence of religious emotion in Ahab in his time of need or distress. The name of Jehovah did not pass his lips. The victory was not granted him for his merit but out of divine compassion. The two victories over the Syrians were designed to remind king and people that Jehovah was the only true God, the God of Israel, the God of all nations. Help came from God unsought and when there was no thought of seeking it in order that Ahab might be brought into circumstances where he would recognize God and prove his mercy. God ordered the battle. He timed everything so to fit in with circumstances as to bring about the promised result. As the blow was about to fall God's shield was set between his people and death. Ahab was left in the presence of his people a helpless debtor to his God whose altars he had overthrown and whose help he had ignored. The judgment upon Benhadad was mercy to Ahab. It delivered him from the hand of a cruel oppressor. It gave him another warning and an opportunity to repent. It exalted the true God among the heathen. The glory of God was manifested in his mercy to Israel.

II. **Exercised to destroy false religion.** The battles of olden times were regarded as contests between national deities. In the defeats we see the punishment of Syria and King Benhadad. The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small. Benhadad was confident in his pride, cruel in his malice and unrestrained in his mockery. It was his delight to insult fallen Israel. His overweening confidence together with his drunkenness directly contributed to his humiliation. It was intensely humiliating that a company of such combatants as Israel sent forth should rout his formidable army. His drunkenness resulted in the loss of his army, his horses and chariots. He was too drunk to appear at the head of his army and so cowardly as to seek his safety in fear. No success attended his orders issued from his place of drunken revelry. The victory was gained under the leadership of the man whom God might have righteously destroyed. The triumph was complete. Benhadad was a fugitive and his army a prey that all Israel and Syria might learn that God lives and rules all nations. God foretelling a thing so seemingly unlikely through his prophet proved it was his own doing. It would have been strange if such overbearing brutality as Benhadad's had gone unproved. His thirty-two men drank with him and fell with him. They had no help in their gods. Their boasting was vain. It was justice and mercy that they should know their delusion. The evils of intemperance were the same in ancient days as they are now.

T. E. A.

Blackboard Exercise

<p>DRUNKENNESS DEFEATED THIS HEATHEN ARMY.</p> <p>WHAT EFFECT DOES IT HAVE ON OUR ARMY?</p> <p>ON OUR BOYS? ON THE WORLD?</p>	<p>GOD SAVE THE BOYS</p>	<p>MODERN INDUSTRY. THE CIVIL SERVICE. HOME DEFENSE ARE ALL DEMAND- ING SOBER MEN.</p> <p>VICTORY IS IN SIGHT.</p>
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Practical Applications

"I will deliver it into thine hand" (v. 13). After Benhadad had boasted that the dust of Samaria should not suffice for handfuls for all the people that followed him, it seemed an impossibility for that great host to be delivered into the hand of Israel's king. However it was the word of God and the fulfilment of the promise was not far in the future. The liquor forces have been many, and are still a multitude, though growing perceptibly less, yet the labors and prayers of sober and godly men, women and children have brought the conviction that the multitude shall be delivered into the hand of righteousness and sobriety. The tables are turned in the temperance campaign. The besieged hosts are the liquor forces, entrenched behind the fortresses of sensuality and greed, and the besieging forces are the temperance hosts, bringing to bear argument, law-enforcement, moral suasion, the public conscience, the public health and the public wealth, and stronghold after stronghold is giving way, and it is but a question of a few more years until the accursed traffic must make an unconditional surrender. With God multitudes do not count.

"By the young men" (v. 14). It was natural that the king should ask the question, "By whom?" when such a marvelous victory was predicted. The young men were there from the provinces, every one a prince, and untrained in spelling "defeat." There were not many of them, but they were acting in defense of God's chosen people and proved to be invincible. When the young men become thoroughly aroused in a great cause opposition must give way. Children and young people are doing valiant service in fighting the saloon hosts and victory is certain. The young men of the nation will be the gainers by the prohibition of the liquor traffic, for the young men are filling the ranks of those slain by rum. From inquiries made it has been learned that sixty-eight per cent of the army of drinkers learned to drink before reaching the age of twenty-five years. It is a noble thing for young men to throw their strength into the fight for world-wide prohibition.

"Who shall order the battle?" (v. 14). The need was urgent. The deliverance promised was astounding. There appeared to be no leader in sight to cope with the situation. "Who shall order the battle?" to insure victory to Israel? The prophet was as ready to name the leader as he was to declare by whom victory was to be given. The responsibility fell upon the king. In the temperance campaign the Lord is leading on his hosts. He is ordering the battle and thousands of loyal men and women are hearing and obeying his commands.

"Drinking himself drunk" (v. 16). A most ruinous way of making preparation for battle was this. When Benhadad and his allied kings needed a clear brain and a strong hand, they were making themselves utterly unfit for battle. The liquor power has made itself drunk with arrogance, greed and blood, and the time is opportune for the "princes" to make the assault that will lay the enemy low. The "young men," moving in firm array under the leadership of him who orders the battle, shall yet gloriously triumph.

"Slew every one his man" (v. 20). Each one in the army has his place to fill. The great and the small, the young and the old, all are entrusted with responsibility in the conflict. The armor is (1) the shield of faith, (2) the sword of truth, (3) the great facts about the destructiveness and deceitfulness of drink, and (4) the thing that the traffic most fears, the ballot.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—Drunkenness brings ruin.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

VICTORY THROUGH { Courage
God's Help

DEFEAT THROUGH { Drunkenness
Pride

A starting point. A newsboy in a large city sometimes entered a saloon to sell his papers. His parents taught him that it was wrong to drink liquor, and in Sunday-school he had learned the evils of intemperance. He was opposed to the saloon. As he grew older the saloon-keeper one day said to him, "You are big enough to drink now," and gave him a drink. The boy learned to drink and for years spent much of his time and money in saloons, and lost one good position after another through his drinking habits until he became an outcast. This story gives a very mild picture of the course of this sinful habit. Tell one or two stories to illustrate the dreadful results of liquor drinking. Your work to-day is to create a temperance atmosphere in your class.

Victory through courage and God's help. Have a map of Palestine and Syria and show the class the relative position of Damascus and Samaria. It would be better to draw an outline map on the board before the class and point out the places, showing how far the Syrians had to march to reach Samaria. Picture the immense army of Benhadad as they were encamped before Samaria. Explain the demands that the Syrian king made upon Ahab and the willingness of the latter to meet them and to consider himself, his people and his gold and silver the property of the king of Syria. Explain the further demands of the king and Ahab's refusal to fulfil them. Represent Ahab's little army of seven thousand by a line one-half inch long, and Benhadad's army by a line ten inches long. Dwell upon the fact that just at the time when Israel's need was the greatest the Lord sent a prophet to Ahab, the king, to encourage him by promising victory over the vast Syrian army. The Lord will always come to us when we need him, if we ask him. Ahab was to be shown again that there was a God in Israel. Give a vivid word picture of the two hundred thirty-two young men starting out of the city followed by the seven thousand to attack the hosts of Benhadad, and show the great Syrian army turning to flee at the first assault made by the young men. Through their courage and the help of the Lord they won a great victory that day.

Defeat through drunkenness and pride. Draw a contrast between what was being done in the two armies before the battle. In Samaria the prophet of the Lord was assuring the king of Israel of victory and the people were believing God's word. In the camp of the Syrian army Benhadad and the thirty-two kings under him were drinking until they were intoxicated, thinking there was no danger, or recklessly putting themselves in such a condition that they could do little in battle. Show the folly of the king's command to capture the two hundred thirty-two young men and make them prisoners whether they were coming in peace or not. The Syrian army had unfitted themselves to use common sense as well as to resist the enemy.

LESSON XIII

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Mar. 20.—Kingdom divided.—1 Kings 12:1-24. Tu.—Asa's good reign.—2 Chron. 15:1-15. Wed.—Jehoshaphat's reign.—2 Chron. 17:1-13. Th.—Elijah's victory.—1 Kings 18:1, 2, 17-40. Fr.—Na-both's vineyard.—1 Kings 21:1-29. Sat.—A child's life restored.—2 Kings 4:8-37. Su.—Defeat.—1 Kings 20:12-21.

REVIEW.—Read Prov. 14: 21-35.

SUPT.—21 He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he.

School.—22 Do they not err that devise evil? but mercy and truth shall be to them that devise good.

23 In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury.

24 The crown of the wise is their riches: but the foolishness of fools is folly.

25 A true witness delivereth souls: but a deceitful witness speaketh lies.

26 In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge.

27 The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

28 In the multitude of people is the king's honour: but in the want of people is the destruction of the prince.

29 He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.

30 A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones.

31 He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.

32 The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.

33 Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding: but that which is in the midst of fools is made known.

34 Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.

35 The king's favour is toward a wise servant: but his wrath is against him that causeth shame.

SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—Happy is that people, whose God is the Lord. Psa. 144: 15.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—There is fulness of blessing in the paths of righteousness.

TOPIC.—The divided kingdom.

INTRODUCTION.—The lessons of the quarter cover eighty or ninety years of the history of the two kingdoms of Israel, and those years are full of events of great significance. The divine displeasure at sin is manifested in a marked degree. The history of the kingdom of Israel is one unbroken series of wicked and idolatrous administrations, while the history of the kingdom of Judah is brightened by the reigns of several good kings. The illustrious prophets Elijah and Elisha were sent by Jehovah to warn the people and bring them back to righteousness.

SUMMARY.—Lesson I. Topic: A national crisis. Place: Shechem. Rehoboam, the successor of Solomon upon the throne of Israel, refused to yield to the just demands of his people, and ten of the twelve tribes of the nation fell away to Jeroboam, a man of marked ability and influence, who had been a servant of Solomon. The exercise of a little forbearance and wisdom on Rehoboam's part would easily have prevented the division of the kingdoms.

II. Topic: The results of disunion. Place: Shechem. Jeroboam was wise as a politician. He saw the danger that might threaten his hold upon his people if they should mingle freely with the people of the southern kingdom by going to Jerusalem to attend to their religious duties. To guard against such a possibility he established religious centers at Bethel and Dan, setting up golden calves as representations of the true God.

III. Topic: The groundwork of a revival. Place: Jerusalem. Under the inspiration that came to the kingdom of Judah through the prophet Azariah during the reign of Asa, the king instituted important reforms and the people made a solemn covenant to seek the Lord with all the heart. They found the Lord and had success.

IV. Topic: Deepening shadows in Israel. Places: Tirzah; Samaria. Omri, the king of Israel, removed his capital from Tirzah to Samaria. He was more wicked than his predecessors and led his people into greater sin. He was followed at the end of his reign of twelve years by his son Ahab,

the most wicked of Israel's kings. Ahab married a heathen woman named Jezebel, whose influence upon the king and the people was deplorable. Her name has come down through history as a synonym of baseness and unbridled cruelty.

V. Topic: The conditions of national prosperity. Place: The kingdom of Judah. Because Jehoshaphat carefully followed the Lord he became strong in his kingdom, and Judah was feared and respected by nations round about. The king sent out teachers throughout his kingdom to instruct the people in the law of the Lord. The thorough acceptance of God's word resulted in strengthening the nation commercially and morally.

VI. Topic: Elijah as God's messenger. Places: Samaria; Cherith; Zarephath. We are introduced to Elijah the Tishbite, who visited Ahab with the announcement of a three and one-half years' drought. During this time the Lord protected the prophet from the anger of Ahab, and provided for him at the brook Cherith and at the home of the widow of Zarephath. The widow and her son and the prophet lived for two or three years upon the miraculous increase of a handful of meal and a cruse of oil.

VII. Topic: Decision day in Israel. Place: Mount Carmel. In the test on Carmel proposed to Ahab by Elijah the participants seemed unevenly matched,—Elijah, the only prophet of Jehovah on one side and four hundred prophets of Baal on the other. The simple prayer of Elijah brought fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice, and the people were led to declare in favor of the true God. As a result of this test Baal-worship received a severe blow, but it was far from being destroyed, as Elijah had hoped it would be.

VIII. Topic: A turning-point in Elijah's ministry. Places: Mount Carmel; Jezreel; Beer-sheba; Horeb. In answer to the prayer of Elijah rain fell in abundance. The prophet went to Jezreel where Jezebel threatened his life. He fled to Beer-sheba and thence to Horeb where God spoke to him in the still small voice, encouraging him and sending him on an important mission. Although Elijah was downcast and tempted to discouragement during his flight, his journey to Horeb was not altogether in vain.

IX. Topic: The sentence of death. Places:

Samarita; Jezreel. Ahab's weakness of character and Jezebel's cruelty are clearly set forth in the incident of Naboth's vineyard. We see a king sulking because he could not buy Naboth's vineyard from him, and we see a queen falsely accusing an innocent man and executing him in order that Ahab might have the coveted vineyard. We see Elijah on hand at the command of the Lord to reprove Ahab.

X. Topic: God's disposition of men. Places: Gilgal; Bethel; Jericho; east of Jordan. In Elijah we see one of the two instances on record where a man was taken to heaven without passing through the gates of death. Elisha was devoted to his master to the last and received his request for a double portion of Elijah's spirit. The three days' search of the young men for Elijah after his translation was fruitless.

XI. Topic: Events in Elisha's ministry. Places: Shunem; Mount Carmel. A family at Shunem kindly entertained the prophet Elisha and his servant from time to time. The sudden death of the only son of this family sent the mother in haste to the prophet at Carmel for help. Elisha responded to her plea, and on arrival at Shunem prayed to God and put forth his own efforts, and as a result the child's life was restored.

XII. Topic: Divine justice and mercy. Place: Samaria. The disastrous effects of the use of strong drink were clearly apparent in the defeat that came to Benhadad's army before the city of Samaria, which he was besieging. With the help of the Lord the little army of Israel completely routed the hosts of Syria whose leaders at the time were "drinking themselves drunk." Drunkenness brought disaster there as it always does.

TABULAR VIEW

NO.	SUBJECTS	GOLDEN TEXTS	PRACTICAL TRUTHS	OUTLINES
I.	The Kingdom Divided. 1 Kings 12:1-24.	He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed. Prov. 13:20.	It is dangerous to follow unwise counsel.	I. Rehoboam's opportunity. II. Seeking advice. III. Following unwise counsel. IV. A great revolt.
II.	Jeroboam Makes Idols for Israel to Worship. 1 Kings 12:25-13:6.	Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. Exod. 20:4.	Making religion a matter of convenience or worldly profit leads to idolatry.	I. Jeroboam strengthening the kingdom. II. The beginnings of idolatry. III. Breaking God's laws. IV. Warned by a prophet.
III.	Asa's Good Reign in Judah. 2 Chron. 15:1-15.	Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded. 2 Chron. 15:7.	There is success and joy in working with God.	I. Azariah's prophecy. II. Asa encouraged. III. A great assembly. IV. A solemn covenant.
IV.	Omri and Ahab Lead Israel into Greater Sin. 1 Kings 16:15-33.	Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people. Prov. 14:34.	The way of the wicked is downward.	I. Zimri's conspiracy. II. Omri's wicked reign. III. Ahab's more wicked reign.
V.	Jehoshaphat's Good Reign in Judah. 2 Chron. 17:1-13.	Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Matt. 6:33.	There is great encouragement in following the Lord fully.	I. An active reformer. II. Instructing the people in the law. III. An honored and prosperous kingdom.
VI.	Elijah the Prophet Appears in Israel. 1 Kings 17:1-24.	They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. Psa. 34:10.	The Lord cares for those who trust and obey him.	I. Elijah's message to Ahab. II. Elijah at Cherith. III. Elijah sustained at Zarephath. IV. The widow's son raised to life.
VII.	Elijah's Victory over the Prophets of Baal. 1 Kings 18:1, 2, 17-40.	Choose you this day whom ye will serve. Josh. 24:15.	Those who are trustful and obedient receive answers to their prayers.	I. Elijah called to meet Ahab. II. A test proposed. III. The failure of the prophets of Baal. IV. Elijah victorious.
VIII.	Elijah's Flight and Return. 1 Kings 18:41-19:21.	They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. Isa. 40:31.	God gives his children strength, encouragement and guidance.	I. The drought ended. II. Elijah in flight. III. Elijah refreshed. IV. Elijah encouraged. V. Elijah and Elisha.
IX.	Elijah Meets Ahab in Naboth's Vineyard. 1 Kings 21:1-29.	Take heed, and beware of covetousness. Luke 12:15.	One sin leads to another.	I. Ahab's covetousness. II. Jezebel's cruel plot. III. Naboth shamefully executed. IV. Elijah's prophecy against Ahab.
X.	Elijah Goes up by a Whirlwind into Heaven. 2 Kings 2:1-18.	Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him. Gen. 5:24.	We may be faithful to the end.	I. Elijah's departure at hand. II. Elisha's request. III. Elisha's translation.
XI.	Elisha the Prophet Restores a Child to Life. 2 Kings 4:8-37.	The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Rom. 6:23.	There is great benefit in going to the Lord in times of sorrow.	I. Elisha at Shunem. II. Sorrow in the home. III. The appeal to Elisha. IV. The child's life restored.
XII.	Defeat through Drunkenness — Temperance Lesson. 1 Kings 20:12-21.	It is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink. Prov. 31:4.	Folly and weakness are results of the use of strong drink.	I. Benhadad's angry command. II. Israel's defiance encouraged. III. Drunken kings and their folly. IV. Israel's victory.

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. The condition of the kingdom of Israel at the accession of Rehoboam. 2. The period covered by the lessons of the quarter. 3. The moral trend of the kingdoms during this period. 4. The review study may be grouped about three subjects: kings of Judah, kings of Israel, prophets.

II. THEME.—God's hand in the affairs of nations.

III. KINGS OF JUDAH.—1. During the period covered by this quarter Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa, Jehoshaphat and Jehoram reigned in Judah. Our study has not included Abijah and Jehoram. 2. A study of Rehoboam. (1) Ancestry. (2) Character. (3) Acts. (4) The basis of his failure. 3. A study of Asa. (1) His father was a wicked man. (2) The record of Asa's character (1 Kings 15:11). (3) The reforms which he accomplished. 4. A study of Jehoshaphat. (1) Parentage. (2) The condition of Judah at his accession to the throne. (3) His character. (4) The chief events of his reign. He fortified the kingdom, obeyed the commandments of God, destroyed idolatry and had his people instructed in the law of the Lord. His son and successor was a wicked man.

IV. KINGS OF ISRAEL.—1. The list during the period studied is Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri, Ahab, Ahaziah and Jehoram. Our study includes only Jeroboam, Zimri, Omri and Ahab. 2. A study of Jeroboam. (1) His ancestry. (2) His character expressed in an oft-repeated phrase. (3) The great sin of his life. 3. A study of Zimri. (1) How he became king. (2) The length of his reign. (3) His character. 4. Omri. (1) His character. (2) The length of his reign. (3) An important act of his life. 5. A study of Ahab. (1) His parentage. (2) Ability. (3) His character. (4) Three important events of his reign. (5) Jezebel's influence.

V. THE PROPHETS.—1. The need for prophets and their work. 2. A study of Ahaziah, a prophet to Judah. 3. A study of Elijah. (1) His sudden appearance to Ahab. (2) His native place and personal appearance. (3) His character. (4) The principal events of his life. (5) His translation. 4. A study of Elisha. (1) His parentage and early occupation. (2) Called by Elijah at God's command. (3) His devotion to Elijah. (4) The miracles wrought by him. 5. The unnamed prophet who inspired Israel to resist the haughty demands of Benhadad, king of Syria.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—The divided kingdom.

I. The kingdoms.

II. The kings.

III. The prophets.

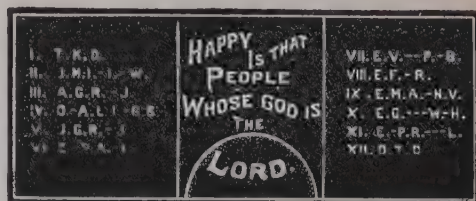
I. The kingdoms. The division of Israel into two kingdoms was a political crisis and a fatal policy. It was the beginning of the end of the true worship of Jehovah, the ascendancy of idolatry and the persecution of true piety. Like a household divided against itself it could but crumble and fall. The hidden cause which lay in Solomon's corrupting power revealed its effect in his successors. Though Israel had some just complaints, the broken unity between the two kingdoms became a wide breach and resulted in the maintenance of independent kingdoms. This involved separate worship. Political disruption destroyed religious unity. The revolt of the ten tribes proved to be mainly their own loss. Their kingdom became the foot-ball of human ambition and caprice so that one insurrection fol-

lowed another. Suicide and murder disgraced its history. Idolatry prevailed and the worshippers of Jehovah were put to death. Things were not so stormy in Judah. The temple was in their midst where the sacred services were conducted by priests and Levites. Though idolatry crept in during Rehoboam's reign and some of the evils of Solomon's later reign existed, more reforms took place and better kings reigned than in Israel. Yet the division was to result in weakness and captivity to both kingdoms.

II. The kings. Though Rehoboam was the rightful successor to his father, Solomon, and should have been as his name indicated, "the enlarger of the kingdom," he became the chief instrument of its disruption. The grievances of the people and the decision of the king brought about the rebellion. The people were stirred by ingratitude, jealousy, envy, hatred, with a strong desire for independence. The tyranny, violence and folly of the king fired them on to rebellion. With Jeroboam, though he reigned over the ten tribes, he had in them the elements of weakness and disloyalty, which bespoke for him strife and internal division. Being self-centered himself he sought first to make his throne secure at the expense of the nation's obedience to God. He appealed to their tribal independence and selfish indulgence. His policy was to establish a lasting wall of separation between the two kingdoms and that he did at the sacrifice of divine forms of worship. Each king in Israel who succeeded him increased in open rebellion against God and caused more unrest and wickedness among the people until Ahab made the worship of Baal the national religion.

III. The prophets. The people had so far fallen into apostasy that few except the prophets uttered a voice against idolatry. Israel was fast hastening on to utter destruction when God graciously empowered Elijah to appear before Ahab and his idolatrous wife, Jezebel, there to proclaim a famine. While the people were left to suffer its dreadful consequences Elijah was graciously fed and protected and later made a great blessing to the widow at Zarephath. When he reappeared in Israel it was for the great test upon Carmel when God answered by fire and consumed his sacrifice. Then came the turning point in Elijah's life work. In the great reaction which followed his tremendous day in Israel he felt great despair for the nation's spiritual welfare. He felt himself a failure in his undertakings while he saw no other man ready to do better. A revelation from God reassured him there was faith in Israel, that other means might be best suited for future work, that he should not be left to battle alone against error. Elisha was given to him as a faithful servant and successor. Through Elijah the schools of the prophets were established, which graciously made up in Israel for the absence of priests and Levites and the temple service such as they had in Judah, and God upheld his followers. T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise



Practical Applications

"It is too much" (1 Kings 12:28). People who do not wish to do the exact right are overflowing with excuses, and the less reasonable is their course, the more inconsistent are their excuses. The excuses offered in the parable of the great supper (Luke 14:18-20) were as flimsy as those which people put forward to-day for not serving the Lord. Jeroboam was acting for selfish ends when he set up the golden calves at Bethel and Dan, and not for the good of his people, although he pretended to be considering their convenience. The thought is suggested that the true service of God is too great a task or sacrifice. "'It is too much' to go to prayer-meeting through the cold or rain," says the lifeless professor of religion. The covetous man thinks "it is too much" to give money for the support of the gospel at home, and in foreign lands. The lover of pleasure feels that "it is too much" for him to forsake the pleasures of sin in order to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. The devotee of fashions thinks "it is too much" to ask of any one to lay aside the trappings of pride and show. The tendency still exists to frame a religion to suit the individual convenience, hence the multitude of gods at Bethel and Dan and numberless other places.

"How long halt ye?" (1 Kings 18:21). It is a disadvantage in earthly things for one to be undecided, but it is a disaster in eternal things. The call is made for a decision. The ability to decide is present, and there is a high motive to decide wisely. We can not avoid making a decision any more than we can escape the consequences of the decision we make. In the picture, "Diana or Christ," is told a story of the early days of Christianity. A Christian girl stands beside a pagan altar, and many are urging her to burn incense upon it, while the Roman governor is sitting by, watching to see the choice she makes. In the background is the amphitheater in which death by wild beasts awaits her if she refuses to burn the incense. If she burns the incense, thus denying Christ and acknowledging the pagan gods, she will be set free. Her fate hangs in the balance, but the expression on her face shows determination to be steadfast. Pizarro, the conqueror of Peru, in his earlier years of effort offered his followers a choice. Drawing a line on the sand, he said, "On this side are ease and pleasure; on the other, toil and danger. But on this side are Panama and poverty; on the other, Peru, riches and glory." We are called upon to make choice between the self-denying way of the cross, with the rich rewards of God's grace and eternal life, and the way of the world and sin, with discontent in this life and an eternity of bitterness and despair beyond.

"I will not leave thee" (2 Kings 2:6). There are times when the decision that is made is tested. Ruth and Orpah both resolved to go with Naomi to the land of Israel, but Orpah was persuaded to return, while Ruth, in persisting in her determination to be with the people of God, gained for herself a place among the honored women of all time. In times of weakness and outward stress men have turned back from God and duty and have been losers eternally by that act. A strong determination to follow God always is an effective part of the Christian's equipment. Elisha's steadfast purpose to be with Elijah until the moment of the latter's departure from earth secured for him the mantle of his master and the right to be his true successor. A scribe said to Jesus, "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." That decision was the best one he could have made, and would have brought him infinite blessing had he carried it out.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—Nations as well as men suffer from wrong-doing.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

A DIVIDED KINGDOM

JUDAH

Rehoboam I
Asa III
Jehoshaphat V

ISRAEL

Jeroboam II
Omri I
Ahab IV

PROPHETS

{ Azariah
Elijah VI-X
Elisha XI

DEFEAT THROUGH DRUNKENNESS XII

The review. The teacher may adopt one of several plans for the review. With older classes it may seem best to ask each pupil to memorize the titles and Golden Texts of the lessons in their proper order. With younger classes one or two titles and Golden Texts may be assigned to each child. In this quarterly review there are a number of different persons named, and a king or a prophet might be assigned to each member of the class on the Sunday before the review, so that they may be prepared to give the stories of the different persons for the review. The treatment of the review as indicated in the blackboard outline is by subjects rather than by individual lessons. Connect some one important incident with each person mentioned in the outline.

Kings of Judah. First of all, Rehoboam comes before us as the man who refused to deal kindly with his subjects, and ten tribes out of the twelve of his kingdom revolted and formed a new kingdom. He declared that he would be more oppressive than his father. He refused the wise counsel of the old men. Asa is noted for the reforms he brought about, especially in putting down idolatry. Asa was good although his father was wicked. If we have good parents we should be thankful, but even if they are wicked we can be good if we will. Jehoshaphat also was a good man, the son of a good father. Tell how he started a kind of traveling Sunday-school. He sent capable persons throughout his kingdom to teach the people the law of the Lord. Other kings of Judah during the period we have studied this quarter are Abijah, who followed Rehoboam, and Jehoram, who followed Jehoshaphat.

Kings of Israel. Jeroboam was the first ruler of the new kingdom, and the one who set up the golden calves. It is said again and again that he made Israel to sin. The facts about Omri to be remembered are that he was wicked, and that he changed the capital of Israel from Tirzah to Samaria. Ahab was the most wicked king of Israel. His marriage to the cruel and idolatrous Jezebel made him worse than he would have been otherwise.

The prophets. Explain that prophets were men chosen by the Lord to declare his will to men or to foretell future events. Tell the story of Azariah's coming to Asa to direct him and to encourage him in his good work for Judah. Write upon the board, "Elijah the Tishbite," and underneath, twelve events in his life, as, "Foretells drought," "Fed by ravens." God's call to Elisha to become a prophet to take the place of Elijah was clear. Show how Elisha manifested his devotion to Elijah, and how desirous he was to have the same spirit that Elijah had.



THE RIVER ABANA

IDOLATRY IN ISRAEL

There seems to have been a strange perverseness in the Israelitish nation that prompted them to turn to the worship of the gods of surrounding nations, even after they had seen the marvelous displays of divine power in their behalf, as God brought deliverance to them from the hands of their oppressors. The study of the nation is a study of repeated and persistent departures from the true God to the worship of the gods of the heathen. At the very time that God was delivering to Moses on Mount Sinai the code of laws for that nation and for the nations of all time, there was taking place at the foot of the mountain a gross violation of that code. The calf was the main object of worship in Egypt, and it is not surprising that the people who had just emerged from a condition of bondage in that land, when they turned to the worship of a god other than the true God, should adopt the symbol of one with whose worship they had become familiar during generations of enforced residence in Egypt. The sacred calf of Egyptian worship represented strength and fruitfulness, and the living animal rather than its image was the object of worship.

That there was a predisposition in the children of Israel to go into idolatry is apparent from three considerations: 1. The fact that the first two of the Ten Commandments expressly forbade idolatry is evidence furnished by God himself of that tendency in human nature. 2. The fact that most active and severe measures were adopted when Moses saw what Aaron had done in making the golden calf for the people to worship. 3. The history of the nation from the time of their sojourn at Sinai until the final captivity of the kingdom of Judah is evidence of this tendency.

Baal-worship was the most common form of idolatry that cursed the people of Israel. Baal was the chief deity of the Phoenicians and represented power and fruitfulness. He was worshiped under a variety of forms. As he was recognized as the chief male deity, so there was included in this religious system a chief female deity, Astarte, whose representations are spoken of in the scriptures as "groves." "The worship of Baal was known to the Hebrews in the desert, and many were induced to adopt it by the Moabitish women (Num. 25); and this worship, in the time of the Judges, became their besetting sin, so that vigorous, though only partially successful, efforts were made to eradicate it (Judg. 2:11, 13; 3:7; 6:25; 10:6; 1 Sam. 7:4; 12:10). Then came the reformation under Saul and David; a relapse followed under Solomon; and at length Ahab, king of Israel, influenced by Jezebel, introduced the worship of the Zidonian Baal, and advanced this idolatrous worship to the exclusion of that of Jehovah (1 Kings 16:31; 19:10). It had so strong a hold upon the affections of the people that it was not until Jehu, by stratagem, put a large number of Baal-worshippers to death, that this hold was loosened; only temporarily, however, for the people returned to it not long after. In Judah there was likewise inveterate Baal-worship, although not so much favored by the reigning house. Ahaz practised it (2 Kings 16:3; 2 Chron. 28:2); Hezekiah repressed it (2 Kings 18:4); but Manasseh continued it (2 Kings 21:3). He, however, was the last king to do so."

The sin of Jeroboam in setting up the golden calves at Bethel and Dan for the convenience of his people as symbols of Jehovah has not been allowed to be forgotten. Whatever may have been the real motive of Jeroboam in that act, its effect was to plunge his people into the grossest idolatry, and his successors upon the throne of Israel followed his infamous example. It is sadly interesting to observe the efforts of the nations of Israel to serve the gods of the nations about them, and at the same time acknowledge in a degree Jehovah, the God of Israel, as if they desired to obtain all the benefit that was to be derived from both religions. Their efforts were just as futile as are the efforts of those to-day who attempt to serve Jesus Christ and the world at the same time. There was no benefit to be derived from idolatrous worship at its best, and in attempting to practise that, and at the same time to serve Jehovah, no benefit could be derived from the latter.

LESSON I

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Mar. 27.—Naaman's journey.—2 Kings 5:1-7. Tu.—Naaman's cleansing.—2 Kings 5:8-14. Wed.—Gehazi punished.—2 Kings 5:15-27. Th.—Elisha sent only to Naaman.—Luke 4:16-30. Fr.—Leprosy of Miriam.—Num. 12:1-15. Sat.—Leprosy of Uzziah.—2 Chron. 26:16-23. Su.—Healing a leper.—Mark 1:40-45.

ELISHA HEALS NAAMAN THE SYRIAN.—2 Kings 5:1-27. Print 5:1-14.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 13, 14)

SUPT.—1 Now Na'a-man, captain of the host of the king of Syr'i-a, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syr'i-a: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper.

School.—2 And the Syr'i-ans had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Is'ra-el a little maid; and she waited on Na'a-man's wife.

3 And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Sa-mar'i-a! for he would recover him of his leprosy.

4 And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Is'ra-el.

5 And the king of Syr'i-a said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Is'ra-el. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment.

6 And he brought the letter to the king of Is'ra-el, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Na'a-man my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy.

7 And it came to pass, when the king of Is'ra-el had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me.

8 And it was so, when E-li'sha the man of God had heard that the king of Is'ra-el had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Is'ra-el.

9 So Na'a-man came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of E-li'sha.

10 And E-li'sha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jor'dan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.

11 But Na'a-man was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.

12 Are not Ab'a-na and Phar'par, rivers of Da-mas'cus, better than all the waters of Is'ra-el? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.

13 And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?

14 Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jor'dan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

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*AMERICAN REVISION

1 Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honorable, because by him Jehovah had given victory unto Syria: he was also a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper. 2 And the Syrians had gone out in bands, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maiden; and she waited on Naaman's wife. 3 And she said unto her mistress, Would that my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! then would he recover him of his leprosy. 4 And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maiden that is of the land of Israel. 5 And the king of Syria said, Go now, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment. 6 And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, And now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy. 7 And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? but consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me.

8 And it was so, when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel. 9 So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariots, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. 10 And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean. 11 But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of Jehovah his God, and wave his hand over the place, and recover the leper. 12 Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage. 13 And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean? 14 Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. Isa. 45:22.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—The way of humility and faith is the way of blessing.

TOPIC.—A twofold blessing.

OUTLINE.—I. Naaman's malady. II. A remedy suggested. III. The remedy sought. IV. The remedy effective. V. Gehazi's sin and punishment.

TIME.—B. C. 889.

PLACES.—Damascus, the capital of Syria; Samaria, the capital of Israel; the Jordan.

READ.—2 Kings 3-5.

INTRODUCTION.—The lessons of the quarter upon

which we now enter deal with the history of the nations of Israel down to the fall of the kingdom of Israel. Taking up the narrative of Elisha's life, we read that after restoring the Shunammite's child to life, he twice miraculously provided food in time of famine. In the first instance he healed the deadly pottage (2 Kings 4:38-41); in the second he fed abundantly a hundred men with a supply of food not sufficient for more than one-fifth of that number. "As the one [miracle] suggests the power of divine truth to counteract the evils of heresy, the other may represent that not only must heresy in the church be offset with truth, but, to keep out heresy, the church must be abundantly fed with the true bread from heaven, which giveth life unto the world. This miracle makes us think of that of Christ in feeding the thousands that gathered round him; but

in this case Elisha's agency, unlike Christ's, is noticeably in the background."—*Whedon*. The healing of Naaman forms one of the most interesting stories in the scriptures. It shows by illustration the power of Christ to cleanse away the malady of sin, presenting at the same time the conditions upon which the remedy becomes effective.

COMMENTARY.—I. **NAAMAN'S MALADY** (v. 1). **1. Naaman**—The name is Hebrew as well as Syrian, and means "pleasant," "beautiful." **captain**—He was commander-in-chief of the armies of Syria. **a great man with his master**—He stood high in the estimation of Benhadad, king of Syria, because of his successes in war. There is a tradition, evidently without foundation, that Naaman was the man who, in the battle between Syria and Israel (1 Kings 22: 34), drew his bow at a venture and slew Ahab. **honourable**—Honored. **a mighty man in valour**—He was possessed of unusual courage and skill. As the warrior in that age engaged in hand to hand combat with the enemy, he must have physical strength to be successful, and Naaman must have been strong physically before he was afflicted with the leprosy. **but**—A word of wonderful significance in this narrative and in almost every phase of human experience. With all his greatness, his skill, his bravery and success Naaman was a leper. This would be his ruin. It was only a question of time with him when he would become an outcast. **he was a leper**—The disease of leprosy was, and is still, one of the most dreaded of all physical maladies. It was widespread, being found in many lands and climes. It was also considered incurable. It was considered contagious and the Jewish law required those afflicted to dwell apart.

II. A REMEDY SUGGESTED (vs. 2-4). **2. by companies**—Troops of Syrians entered the territory of Israel upon marauding expeditions to secure whatever plunder they were able. **brought away captive**—To be held as a slave. **a little maid**—This young Israelitish girl was torn from her loved ones at home and taken into a strange country and among a strange people. Only those who have had the experience can realize the suffering and the heartache of such a calamity, yet this girl, trained in the religion of Israel, rose above her surroundings and made known her faith in God. "Like Joseph in Egypt, and Daniel in Babylon, this captive girl becomes the instrument of making Jehovah known among the heathen."—*Whedon*. **waited on Naaman's wife**—The service was far different from that required of slaves in more modern times. This girl was upon familiar terms with her mistress, and felt an interest in the welfare of her master. **3. would God**—"Would that."—*R. V.* Expressive of deep desire. **my lord**—Naaman. **the prophet that is in Samaria**—Elisha. The Jewish girl had been familiar with the remarkable career of this servant of Jehovah. **would recover him**—Literally, "gather" him from his leprosy. An allusion to the Israelitish custom of shutting lepers out of the camp and then gathering them in after the leprosy was healed.

III. THE REMEDY SOUGHT (vs. 5-10). **5. go to, go**—An expression calling for immediate action. The king at once opened the way for Naaman to apply to the king of Israel for relief. **departed, and took with him**—He took a present to Jehoram. We can not estimate the value accurately. The money was probably weighed, and "talents," and "pieces," or shekels, were standards of weight. "A silver talent was worth \$1,944, in all \$19,440. A gold shekel was worth \$9.75, in all \$58,500."—*Bible Treasury*. According to this Naaman took nearly \$78,000. **raiment**—Doubtless it was clothing of

great value. **6. that thou mayest recover him**—The king of Syria considered it fitting to make the request directly to the king of Israel, who would at once be able to give Naaman all needful information. **7. rent his clothes**—In token of his distress of mind. Not only was Jehoram powerless to heal the disease, but he was not even sufficiently familiar with Elisha to direct the leper to him. The king knew that the leprosy was incurable.

8. Elisha....heard—No doubt the coming of the Syrian general with his retinue, and the fact that the king had rent his clothes, caused a sensation in Samaria, and the news came speedily to Elisha, who appears to have had his home in the capital city. **wherefore**—A rebuke to the king for not knowing of the presence and power of the man of God. **a prophet in Israel**—It was to be shown that the God of Israel was the true God, for the good of the king of Israel as well as for the good of Naaman and the kingdom he represented. Jehoram had neglected the worship of Jehovah and needed to be reformed. **9. at the door of the house of Elisha**—It was a magnificent retinue that halted at Elisha's door. **10. sent a messenger**—There were two reasons why Elisha did not personally appear to Naaman. He desired the captain to realize that it was by the power of Jehovah that the cure would be wrought and not by human means. He also wished Naaman to humble himself and accept the simple conditions proposed by the prophet. **seven times**—"The sacred number seven was used in the Levitical observances connected with the cleansing of healed lepers."

IV. THE REMEDY EFFECTIVE (vs. 11-19). **11. Naaman was wroth**—Sufficient deference was not paid to him, as he thought, and the remedy proposed was too ridiculous to consider seriously. **strike his hand over the place**—According to the custom of the magicians. **12. better**—The rivers of his own land were certainly clearer and more inviting than the Jordan, which was an unattractive stream. **may I not wash in them, and be clean**—No, for God has directed thee to Jordan, and by its waters or none shalt thou be cleansed.—*Clarke*. **in a rage**—There was leprosy in his body, but a worse leprosy was in his soul. **13. servants**—Naaman had admirable servants. They were wise and generous. **my father**—"There is no other instance where servants thus address their master. It indicates the affectionate relation between Naaman and those about him." **14. then went he down**—He submitted and obeyed the words of the prophet. His cure was perfect. **15-19**. When Naaman realized that his cure was complete he returned to bestow a present upon Elisha, but the prophet would take nothing. Naaman was led to believe in the God of Israel.

V. GEHAZI'S SIN AND PUNISHMENT (vs. 20-27). The baseness of Gehazi's act can scarcely be overstated. His sin involved not only his personal character, but cast a shadow falsely upon that of Elisha. The prophet had refused a present, and the servant's act made Elisha to appear as a changeling. Gehazi's punishment was not too severe for his sin.

QUESTIONS.—Who was king of Israel? Of Syria? Who was Naaman? What can you say of the leprosy? Who waited on Naaman's wife? What did this servant tell her mistress? What did the king of Syria do? Where did Naaman go? What did he take as a present? What did the king of Israel do? What word did Elisha send to the king? What did the prophet tell Naaman to do? Why was Naaman angry? What did his servants say to him? What did Naaman finally decide to do? What was the result? What was Gehazi's sin?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. Time and great events covered by the studies of the first quarter. 2. Time covered by the second quarter. 3. Resume the study of Elisha. 4. The cleansing of the leper bears a striking analogy to salvation from sin.

II. THEME.—The power of God to heal the leprosy of sin.

III. THE DISEASE.—1. Leprosy is progressive. 2. It is a loathsome disease. 3. It is incurable by human agency. 4. The disease is fatal. 5. In all of these respects leprosy is typical of sin. 6. Naaman was a great man, and had brilliant prospects, but he was a leper. Apply this spiritually. Sin is the disease that touches every one that comes into the world.

IV. A REMEDY SUGGESTED.—1. Note the condition of this Jewish slave girl. 2. Her early religious training and interest in her master. 3. A means of bringing the knowledge of the true God to a heathen nation. 4. Her faith and zeal bring a lesson to us.

V. THE REMEDY SOUGHT.—1. The king of Syria and his chief military man gave due attention to form and made proper application for help. 2. The embarrassing situation of Jehoram, the king of Israel. 3. It is not always the highest dignitaries in the church that know the most about how to get people saved. 4. Note what Naaman was willing to part with that he might find relief.

VI. THE REMEDY SPURNED.—1. Naaman considered himself slighted by Elisha. 2. The conditions seemed too humiliating. 3. The leper preferred his leprosy to the humiliation of employing the simple means proposed. Some people act as if they would rather be lost than repent of their sins and fully submit to God.

VII. THE REMEDY APPLIED.—1. A better thought came later. 2. The wise and effective suggestion of Naaman's servant. 3. A complete cure resulted from the application of the remedy. 4. The effect of the cure upon Naaman's religious belief and practice. 5. The assurance that God gives to those whose sins are forgiven.

VIII. AN ECHO OF THE CURE.—1. Elisha's refusal of Naaman's gift. The prophet's work was not for money. 2. The sins of Gehazi. (1) Covetousness. (2) Falsehood. (3) Deception. 3. The punishment inflicted. 4. Those who are surrounded by the best influences may go wrong. Sin has its seat in the heart.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—A twofold blessing.

I. The result of a child's prayer.

II. The outcome of humble obedience.


I. The result of a child's prayer. Two captives lived within the same house. One was a little maid separated from her home and parents, a captive slave girl in a heathen household, but for all this she was a faithful servant of her God. The other captive was a man of rank, highly esteemed in his nation and the possessor of great wealth, "but" he was a captive of the deadly disease leprosy, a bondage which embittered all other freedom. The purchase of that little child might have seemed a small thing to Naaman and his wife, but it proved a momentous purchase, the beginning of the development of the seed of true religion in a heathen land. Her abiding faith in the God of Israel and her knowledge of his prophet made her yearn for the welfare of others. Her heart's desire which she expressed so feelingly fell on some ear which took

note of it. A poor child, a humble servant may have a royal soul. It may be said that the little captive maid stirred kingdoms. Her good advice was the first movement toward Naaman's salvation in body and soul and toward his deliverance from heathenism. Her faith in God showed itself in the details of her life. She told as she believed, where the blessing of health was likely to be found. Her master and mistress might have said that her worship of her God rather than theirs was an impertinence, a sort of suggestion that their religion was false. Yet through her their solace and help came. There, under the very shadow of death the mercy of God was to be found. Light rose from obscurity and darkness became as the noonday. Naaman was as great as the world could make him yet no earthly power could heal him. In the midst of earthly happiness he found sorrow. Yet he was soon to prove that though there is misery there is also alleviation. Neither age nor experience, position nor power, personal worth nor the esteem of others prevented the dread calamity of his being a leper, but there was a prophet in Israel. A child's expressed longing resulted in the meeting of Naaman and Elisha.

II. The outcome of humble obedience. It is a common error for men to prescribe to God the ways of his providence and the methods of his assistance. Pride and deliverance hung in the balance. The question was which would go up and which would go down. Naaman sought cleansing with a lofty heart. He went as the king's captain. He laid his claims before an apostate king and was about to return unhelped. Israel's king was terrified for he had a bad conscience. He saw more in the king's letter than was written. There was no thought of God with him, but God was first in the thoughts of the captive slave girl. The king thought not of Elisha. The maid thought not of the king. Not from Israel's king but from Israel's God; not through Israel's king but Israel's prophet, should help come to Naaman. Though an apostate king reigned in Israel, a faithful prophet dwelt there. Though the people Israel were apostate there was an unchanging God. A second time Naaman was about to fail in his expectations and that because of his folly and obstinacy. Elisha understood what respect was due to authority and position, but just then he had to do with Naaman the man, with Naaman the leper, not with Naaman the general. Elisha's first business was to teach God's truth and do what was best for Naaman. The difference between true religion and heathen religion is clearly portrayed by the contrast in each point between Naaman's expectations on the one hand and the prophet's words and actions on the other. Naaman had first to experience the power of Elisha's God before he could enter into fellowship with his prophet. Naaman showed his good sense in giving up his original intention and adopting the advice of his servants. The reward of his obedience was speedy, sure and complete.

T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

<p>NAAMAN - PROUD, AMBITIOUS, SCORNED THE WAY OF FAITH. WANTED TO BUY HIS WAY THROUGH.</p>		<p>THE RICH WOULD BUY SALVATION. THE ONLY WAY IS BY THE CROSS. THE BLOOD OF JESUS CLEANSETH FROM ALL SIN</p>
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Practical Applications

"Naaman.... was a leper" (v. 1). Naaman was "captain of the host," he had position and power; he was "a great man with his master," the king loved and trusted him; he was "honourable;" by him the Lord had brought deliverance to his country; he was "a mighty man in valour," he had won many laurels on the field of victory, "but he was a leper." Leprosy is a type of sin, an awful thing from which God is willing to cleanse us. Faith is the first step. Both leprosy and sin are, 1. Loathsome. The most horrible disease, of Satanic invention, an inflamed, ulcerated, disfigured human body is used by God to describe "a sinful nation," of which he says, "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores" (Isa. 1:6). 2. Hereditary. The leper's child would be a leper. Jeremiah's lamentation was, "Our fathers have sinned.... and we have borne their iniquities" (Lam. 5:7). 3. Infectious. Contact with leprosy induced leprosy. So with sin. "Evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15:33). 4. Separating. In Israel a touch of leprosy rendered a man unclean and he was driven from the camp and wore mourning as for the dead and had to cry, "Unclean, unclean" (Lev. 13:45, 46). Sin separates from God (Isa. 59:2; Rev. 21:27). 5. Destructive. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). 6. Deceitful. The leper might not suspect for a long time that he was in danger. Sin is treacherous and deceitful (Jer. 17:9). It does not bring instant pain and death. 7. Incurable by man. "Am I God to kill and to make alive?" (v. 7) cried the king. Not even he had power to heal a leper. Only God, can change those that are accustomed to do evil (Jer. 13:23). 8. Cured by God. James H. Brookes says, "The leper was placed under the care of a priest, not of a physician." When God healed him he might return home (Lev. 14:1-32).

"Elisha.... sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know" (v. 8). In his "loving kindness" our heavenly Father sent to us "from afar" (Jer. 31:3, margin). He bore with our mistakes, broke down our pride, and at last brought us in submission to his feet, the place of blessing.

"Go and wash" (v. 10). The injunction to us is, "Let us cleanse ourselves" (2 Cor. 7:1). "Had he been told to travel a thousand miles further to a place where he would find an extraordinary medicine, he would have gone. Invalids take much trouble and spend much money to buy the medicine of some quack who advertises his pretensions. Many are looking to the streams of their own country in preference to Jordan."

"His servants.... said" (v. 13). "Little things test character. Little things make a life great. Be specially conscientious in little things. Trifle not with little sins. Neglect not little duties. He that is faithful in little is faithful also in much" (Luke 16:10).

"Then went he" (v. 14). Naaman obeyed. God healed him. We wash in the word of God when we believe it and obey it. When we walk "in the light" (1 John 1:7), "according to the saying" (v. 14) of the men of God, by virtue of the atonement, God makes us clean in spirit, soul and body (1 Thess. 5:23, 24).

"Then went he down" (v. 14). Down from the pedestal of his pride (v. 11); down from the high position of his fleshly reason (v. 12); down to learning from his servants (v. 13); down to the waters of judgment (v. 14).

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—There is a perfect cure for the disease of sin.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

NAAMAN'S LEPROSY

A CAPTIVE GIRL'S MISSION

A PROPHET FAITHFUL TO GOD

A PERFECT CURE WROUGHT

Elisha's life story. For a review of Elisha's life write his name in very large letters on the board, and to the right of it group the principal events of his life. Ask each member of the class to name one and write each of them in the fewest possible words. Tell briefly the stories of his rendering the poisonous pottage harmless, and of his feeding a hundred men with a small supply of food. Call attention to Christ's feeding the multitudes. The new event in Elisha's life as told to-day is full of interest. The spiritual application is very simple and should be impressed in a few words as the narrative proceeds.

A famous leper. The children already have some ideas about the leprosy. Let them tell you what they know, and jot down on the board their answers in a few words, then mark off those that are not right. Tell of Naaman's greatness as a general, his wealth and his standing with the king. With all this was he perfectly happy? No? Why? "But he was a leper." Frank is a fine boy, "but" he has a bad temper. Fannie is an attractive girl, "but" sometimes she is untruthful. Show how the leprosy of sin manifests itself.

A slave girl's mission. It will not be difficult to picture a Jewish family living quietly and happily in a little village in Israel, and suddenly one day attacked by a band of plundering Syrians, who take everything of value about the house, and also capture a young girl of the family to carry her back to Syria to sell her as a slave. She is placed in Naaman's home to wait upon his wife. She has been carefully trained at home and has carried her religious teachings with her. She has seen or heard about Elisha's miracles. She wishes her master well, and tells how she believes he could be healed of his leprosy. Here is an excellent opportunity to tell what a child can do for the Lord. It was hard for her to be held as a slave away from her home and among a strange people, yet she remembered the true God. Just a few words told Naaman's cure and to his belief in Jehovah.

A faithful prophet. Paint a word picture of the retinue of Naaman as he approached the palace of Jehoram in Samaria, and see how troubled the king was as he read the letter of the king of Syria. By questioning bring out the facts of Elisha's message to the king, of Naaman's halting at Elisha's door, of the captain's pride and anger and of his servant's wise and timely counsel. Call attention to the part in this event taken by two servants, the Jewish captive and Naaman's servant. No one is too lowly to do something for God.

A perfect cure. Tell about the clear waters of Damascus and the muddy waters of the Jordan. Be sure to explain that it was not the water that cleansed Naaman's leprosy, but the power of God as he obeyed the words of the prophet. We can be made free from the leprosy of sin by obeying God's commands.

LESSON II

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Apr. 3.—Elisha's defenders.—2 Kings 6: 8-23. Tu.—Prophecy of plenty.—2 Kings 6: 24-7: 2. Wed.—Prophecy fulfilled.—2 Kings 7: 3-20. Th.—Deliverance through Jehovah.—1 Sam. 11: 1-13. Fr.—Hezekiah's trust.—2 Chron. 32: 1-23. Sat.—Daniel's trust.—Dan. 6: 1-27. Su.—Angel of Jehovah.—Psa. 34: 1-22.

ELISHA'S HEAVENLY DEFENDERS.—2 Kings 6: 8-23. Print 6: 8-17.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 15-17)

SUPT.—8 Then the king of Syr'i-a warred against Is'ra-el, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp.

School.—9 And the man of God sent unto the king of Is'ra-el, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syr'i-ans are come down.

10 And the king of Is'ra-el sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice.

11 Therefore the heart of the king of Syr'i-a was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Is'ra-el?

12 And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Eli-sh'a, the prophet that is in Is'ra-el, telleth the king of Is'ra-el the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber.

13 And he said, Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Do'than.

14 Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about.

15 And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?

16 And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

17 And Eli-sh'a prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about E-li'sha.

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8 Now the king of Syria was warring against Israel; and he took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp. 9 And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are coming down. 10 And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of; and he saved himself there, not once nor twice. 11 And the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not show me which of us is for the king of Israel? 12 And one of his servants said, Nay, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber. 13 And he said, Go and see where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan.

14 Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. 15 And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, a host with horses and chariots was round about the city. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? 16 And he answered, Fear not; for they that are with us are more than they that are with them. 17 And Elisha prayed, and said, Jehovah, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And Jehovah opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? **School.**—For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. Psa. 91: 11.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—God is near to comfort and defend his children.

TOPIC.—The prayers of a righteous man.

OUTLINE.—I. Elisha aiding the king of Israel. II. Elisha in danger. III. Elisha defended. IV. The Syrian army captured.

TIME.—About B. C. 889.

PLACES.—Dothan, twelve miles north of Samaria; Samaria, the capital of Israel.

READ.—2 Kings 6, 7.

INTRODUCTION.—It is not certain that the several incidents in the life of Elisha as we have them recorded are given in their chronological order. They go to show that the prophet was not only intensely interested in the religious well-being of the nation, but also in its civil prosperity. His miracles for the most part had a bearing upon national affairs, but a few were of a more private character. Elisha seems to have escaped for the most of his life the displeasure of the king of Israel, owing probably to the fact that Jehoram's disposition was very different from that of Ahab, who had been persistent in his opposition to Elijah. It is also a fact that Elisha was less rugged than Elijah, yet each was the kind of prophet his particular period demanded. Elijah was the man for the test at Mount Carmel and the connected incidents, while Elisha was the prophet to deal with Naaman and with the famine in Samaria. The miracle at the Jordan where the iron ax-head was made to float brings out the fact that the schools of the prophets were prosperous even in those times of religious degeneracy. It was probably the house at Jericho that was too small to accommodate the increasing number of the "sons of the prophets" (2 Kings 6: 1-7), and it became necessary for a larger place to be provided.

Elisha's activity in connection with these centers of religious interest, was, no doubt, instrumental in their increasing prosperity, and their influence must have been great throughout the kingdom. The lesson to-day gives a striking demonstration of God's protecting care over individuals as well as nations.

COMMENTARY.—I. **ELISHA AIDING THE KING OF ISRAEL (vs. 8-12).** 8. **king of Syria**—It was Benhadad II, who had been at war with Israel previously (1 Kings 20: 1), and who had given much trouble to that nation. He was slain by Hazael, a servant of his, a few years later and his slayer reigned in his stead. **warred against Israel**—This war was like that known in modern times as guerrilla warfare, in which bands of plunderers made incursions into the enemy's territory. **took counsel**—The king of Syria took direction of the campaign and gave orders to his bands as to where they should locate the camps to be most effective against Israel. The plan was to set ambuscades to entrap the Israelitish army. 9. **the man of God**—Elisha was in communication with God, and the plans of the Syrian king were so disclosed to him, that through the information made known to the king of Israel all the efforts of the Syrian bands became futile. Such displays of Jehovah's power and interest in Israel's welfare should have led the nation to humility and obedience. **pass not such a place**—Writers differ as to their interpretation of this expression. One view is that Israel was warned to keep the armies away from certain specified places, where the Syrians were intending to set ambuscades. The other view is that Israel was

warned not to overlook those particular places, but to preoccupy them by superior forces in order to defeat the Syrians. In either case the knowledge of God and his care for Israel are displayed. **10. saved himself**—With divine direction, and obedience on his part, he was easily able to defeat the forces of the enemy. **not once nor twice**—Again and again was he thus made acquainted with the plans and movements of his enemy, and escaped the snares set for him.—*Whedon*.

11. sore troubled—Vexed and chagrined that all his plans were made known to Israel, and that they could thus treat all his stratagems with derision.—*Whedon*. **show me**—When his design was thus repeatedly frustrated it was natural to think of treachery among his own people.—*Cam. Bible*. **12. one of his servants**—From some Israelite this Syrian may have obtained his knowledge.—*Terry*. **telleth**—A confession of the boundless knowledge, as, before, of the boundless power, of Israel's God is extorted from the Syrians. **in thy bedchamber**—"In the greatest possible secrecy." This reply shows that Elisha had a reputation as a worker of wonders that was not confined to Israel.—*W. J. Beecher*. It is not certain that Naaman's cure had been effected before this time, but if it had, the power of the prophet as a representative of the God of Israel had certainly reached the court of Benhadad.

II. ELISHA IN DANGER (vs. 13-15). 13. go and spy—"Go and see."—*R. V.* **that I may send and fetch him**—It was presumption on the part of Benhadad to attempt to capture the prophet who had been given the power to foretell his movements, and thus defeat all his plans. **he is in Dothan**—Dothan was twelve miles north of Samaria on the road from Samaria to Damascus. The name means "double fountain." It was here that Joseph went in search of his brethren, and from here he was sold to the Ishmaelites (Gen. 37:17). It is possible that Elisha had a residence here as well as in Samaria. **14. horses, and chariots, and a great host**—Not a mere band of marauders, but an organized army. The Syrian king had high respect for the power of the prophet, as is shown by his sending "a great host" to capture him. An army was commissioned to arrest one man, but what was an army before a man in positive communication with heaven? **came by night**—The king made use of the strategy of war to gain his purpose, not realizing that the God of Israel never slumbers. "In all parts of the East, the sudden raids, which are so characteristic of Oriental warfare, generally take place at night and under cover of darkness."—*Tristram*. **compassed the city about**—Reminding one of David's words, "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear" (Psa. 27:3). Benhadad's plan was well laid to insure success if no supernatural element were to be considered. **15. the servant**—Probably not Gehazi, who had become a leper. **alas, my master! how shall we do**—To the servant the situation appeared a dangerous one, for the horses and chariots of the Syrian host had surrounded the place with the one purpose of securing possession of "the man of God," and escape seemed to be an impossibility.

III. ELISHA DEFENDED (vs. 16-18). 16. fear not—It is interesting and encouraging to note the many places in the Bible where this expression is used. Elisha spoke the words out of his own courageous soul. **they that be with us are more than... with them**—The servant saw his master and himself helpless, surrounded by a hostile host; but Elisha saw, in addition, a host of heavenly de-

fenders. The prophet believed that "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them" (Psa. 34:7), and his faith and courage must have inspired the heart of his servant. **17. and Elisha prayed**—Prayer is the never-failing means of help. Elijah prayed and fire fell from heaven to consume the sacrifice (1 Kings 18:36-38); Elisha prayed and the Shunammite's son was restored to life. God's people in all ages have had recourse to prayer. **open his eyes, that he may see**—His physical eyes were open and he saw the host of the enemy. Elisha's prayer was that his spiritual eyes might be opened that he might see the host that surrounded them for their defense. The heavenly defenders were already there and all that was needed was a vision that could perceive them. **the mountain was full**—The hill upon which Dothan was situated was thronged with heavenly defenders. The young man saw the truthfulness of what Elisha had said, "They that be with us are more than they that be with them," and there could be no occasion to fear. They who see the hosts arrayed against them for the purpose of impeding their spiritual progress, and do not see with the eye of faith the army of defenders, arrayed to help them, are at a great disadvantage. **horses and chariots of fire**—On the one side were the horses and chariots of the Syrians with mere men as drivers and warriors, on the other were fiery horses and chariots with angelic leaders to insure the victory. God has unnumbered means at his command to call to the defense of his own. **18. When the Syrian host came to capture the prophet they were wholly unaware of the presence of the army that was defending him, and supposed their task was an easy one.** "The same divine power, which, in answer to prayer, opened the spiritual eyes of the young man, closed and blinded even the natural eyes of the enemies of Elisha. Jehovah blesses his servants with enlarged visions of his power and glory, but curses his enemies with blindness."—*Whedon*. The blindness here mentioned is not actual loss of sight, but rather a confusion of vision so that the Syrian hosts could not tell where they were nor the way they wished to go. The king of Syria had made careful plans for the capture of Elisha, but they utterly failed just as success seemed assured. The divine interposition was accurately timed.

IV. THE SYRIAN ARMY CAPTURED (vs. 19-23). A whole army went out to surround one man by night to make him a prisoner, and that one man in the morning took the entire army prisoners and led them to his king. As the prophet prayed and their eyes were opened, they indeed saw the man whom they sought but not in the place they expected. Through the generous treatment accorded to the Syrian host when they were wholly at the mercy of Israel their attacks upon Israel ceased and for a time there was peace between the two nations. This was one more divine manifestation to Israel of the power of Jehovah in behalf of the nation, but little heed was given to it. It is one of the marvels in Israel's history that they as a nation did not appreciate what was done for them.

QUESTIONS.—What great miracle was wrought in the last lesson? Who was the king of Syria? Why did he think that some of his men were traitors? What explanation did his servants make? What did the Syrian king do? Where was Dothan? Why was Elisha's servant afraid? How did Elisha quiet his fears? What prayer did Elisha offer for the Syrians? How is it shown that Elisha did not deal treacherously with them? Where did the prophet lead them? How did he treat them?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. Connect this lesson with the preceding one. (1) The same prophet. (2) The same nations involved. (3) A miracle in each. (4) The intervening miracle. 2. God has regard for the welfare of individuals and for nations. 3. As the prophet was beset by enemies, so the Christian is opposed by mighty forces. 4. Deliverance comes to them from the same source from which it came to Elisha.

II. THEME.—God's protecting care.

III. ELISHA THE PATRIOT.—1. There are some to-day who think it improper for Christians to take part in the affairs of government. 2. Elisha had the welfare of his nation at heart. 3. The responsibility placed upon Elisha by virtue of the knowledge given to him by Jehovah. 4. Reasons why the prophet was entrusted with this knowledge. (1) The welfare of the nation was at stake. (2) Elisha was patriotic. (3) Elisha knew the voice of God. 5. Israel's success in the war with Syria.

IV. ELISHA'S ARREST ATTEMPTED.—1. The suspicions of Benhadad as to the source of Israel's information about his movements. 2. Elisha's reputation as a prophet extended outside his own nation. 3. The source of Elisha's knowledge. 4. Elisha's location sought by the king of Syria. 5. Benhadad's shortsightedness in attempting to capture Elisha. 6. The carefully laid plan of the Syrian host to take the prophet. (1) His location determined. (2) The force despatched to Dothan. (3) The night sally. (4) The city surrounded. 7. Everything seemed favorable for his speedy capture.

V. ELISHA'S GREAT DELIVERANCE.—1. The fear that possessed Elisha's servant. (1) It arose from his lack of faith in God. (2) He had not had the vision. 2. The prayer of the prophet. (1) Not for an army to defeat the Syrians. (2) For eyes to see the host at hand to defend Elisha and his servant. 3. The necessity of having our spiritual eyes opened. 4. The ease with which Elisha became the victor and captor. 5. With God's presence and help the seemingly impossible becomes easily possible. 6. Horses and chariots of fire, symbols of the divine power and glory, opposed to horses of flesh and chariots of iron. 7. The victory was national in its character. 8. Kindness shown to the captured army. 9. Lessons in faith and kindness.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—The prayers of a righteous man.

- I. In behalf of the young.
- II. That evil might be stayed.
- III. That God's cause might triumph.

I. In behalf of the young. Elisha comforted his servant by his own faith. His clearer vision of the sovereignty and power of heaven made him fear less the calamities of earth. Strong faith realizes both the danger and the security. Elisha was much concerned for the satisfaction of his servant who had seen only his enemies and his danger. His prayer was that the young man's courage might rise with the danger, that the spirit of timidity and fear which stood as a hindrance might be cleared away and he be given a vision of those who defended him. The opening of his eyes was for the silencing of his fears. For his spiritual progress he needed new views of God, of heaven, of truth and a better understanding of the promises. He had eyes which saw only the evil in his circumstances. Elisha would have him see the good as well. The event which overwhelmed the young man with alarm in-

spired Elisha with hope and courage. Under the same circumstances the two received different impressions. The reason for this lay in the difference in their personal faith and relation to God. If Elisha had known beforehand, by a divine revelation that his enemies were coming he would have regarded it as a direction to escape from threatening danger. As it was he confidently committed his way unto the Lord. His eye of faith saw the sure protection of God, where to the natural eye all was dark. Elisha's prayer was in effect that his servant might see that which in the ordinary course of events is not permitted to a man to see. "It is a glorious thought that the veil of earthly nature is here lifted for a moment, for a child of earth, that he may cast a look upon the workings of the divine providence." As Elisha prayed, so should every true servant of God pray for each soul entrusted to his care.

II. That evil might be stayed. Elisha did not pray for harm to his enemies, but that God would make them powerless in their attempts to do evil, and to show them his might. Those who wished to capture him he captured, but his victory was not one of revenge. Like all who fight against God and his servants, they deceived themselves and were justly given up to delusions. Thus it is when the enemies of God and his people fancy themselves ready to triumph, they find themselves triumphed over. Craft and cunning are of no avail against the wisdom which is from on high, for the Lord brings to naught the plots of the crafty so that they can not accomplish them. How vain it was for the Syrians to fight against or attempt to crush a cause in which the agency of a higher power was visible.

III. That God's cause might triumph. Elisha's prayers prevailed three times in this short narrative: first, when timidity was dispelled and living faith was attained; second, when wickedness was thwarted and men were saved from crime; third, when supernatural power was manifested and revenge overcome. Elisha did not exult in his triumph over his enemies. With his spirit of prophecy he had served the king and helped to greater faith one of the young sons of the prophets, and last of all he gained a most glorious victory in turning his enemies into friends. Who can estimate the value of a good man to his country? Benhadad and the Syrians were to learn that they could not accomplish their ends with all their cunning plots against "the prophet that is in Israel," and much less against him whose servant and witness the prophet was. "Elisha...telletth." This was a confession from the Syrians of the boundless knowledge and power of Israel's God. None of the purposes of the wicked are so secret as to escape the notice of God. The Syrians were to learn that Elisha's God was not only a mighty God, but also a merciful and gracious God.

T. B. A.

Blackboard Exercise

<p>ELISHA WAS WELL DEFENDED.</p> <p>YOU ARE SAFE IN GOD'S CARE.</p> <p>THE STEPS OF A GOOD MAN ARE ORDERED BY THE LORD.</p>	 <p>DOTHAN</p>	<p>THIS LESSON IS INTENDED TO TEACH KINDNESS.</p> <p>RETURN GOOD FOR EVIL.</p> <p>THEIR ENEMIES BECAME FRIENDS.</p>
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Practical Applications

"In such and such a place shall be my camp" (v. 8). The worldly man "proposes," forgetting that God "disposes." Even those who live the Canaan life sometimes plan instead of asking for God's guidance. This was Joshua's mistake at Ai. He followed his own plan, and sent but a few men to take the city, when God would have had him "take all the people," and he was defeated (Josh. 7:2-4; 8:1, 2). Whom God guides he guards. If we walk in our own way, he lets defeat come to show us our weakness and lead us to his everlasting strength.

"The man of God sent unto the king of Israel" (vs. 9, 12). "God gave Elisha knowledge to help the king when in danger, and faith when he and his servant were in danger. Knowledge, strength and faith are given us chiefly for the benefit of others. Christians are to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). Miraculous power is still given to men that they may bless and save."

"Fear not" (v. 16). Elisha could say, "Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, even then will I be confident" (Psa. 27:3, R. V.). But the godly care for the comfort of their servants, and Elisha encouraged his with the Bible precept which is repeated about seventy times, from God's first "fear not" to Abraham (Gen. 15:1) to the last to John on Patmos (Rev. 1:17). Fear is from the devil. "God hath not given us the spirit of fear" (2 Tim. 1:7). Fear brings trouble. "I feared a fear and it came" (Job 3:25, margin). Fear shows lack of faith. They who say, "I know whom I have believed," can say, "He is able to keep that which I have committed" (2 Tim. 1:12). Fear shows lack of knowledge. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee" (Psa. 9:10). Fear shows lack of love. "There is no fear in love" (1 John 4:18).

"Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see" (v. 17). Ruskin says, "Too many people go through life without ever looking up." We need our eyes opened to see, 1. God in nature. Jesus said, "Behold the fowls... Consider the lilies" (Matt. 6:26, 28). A lady once said to the artist Turner, "Why put such extravagant colors in your pictures? I never see anything like them in nature." His answer was, "Don't you wish you did, madam?" 2. God in scripture. "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Psa. 119:18), should be our prayer, when we open the Bible, for the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:14, 15). 3. God in providence. We need our eyes closed troubleward and opened heavenward. A Christian worker said, "Going from Scotland to America, a number of the passengers, myself among them, were seasick; and as we sat looking at the great waves rising and falling, we became worse, until the steward came and shut the door, bidding us look the other way. We did so, and recovered." Many look at their troubles and fret and grow worse. If they would look only to Jesus, their troubles would be lost in him.

"And he saw... horses and chariots of fire" (v. 17). A great visible host compassed the city (v. 14), a greater invisible host, the same that conveyed Elijah to heaven (2 Kings 2:11), now guarded Elisha. The spiritual host was as real as the natural host and infinitely more powerful. No mortal can pass God's "wall of fire" (Zech. 2:5) nor withstand his ministers of "flaming fire" (Psa. 104:4; Heb. 1:7).

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—God takes care of his children.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

ELISHA { Defending Israel
Sought by enemies
Wonderfully delivered

THE SYRIAN ARMY CAPTURED

Preliminary. This is the last lesson in the series having to do with the life of Elisha. Review the events already studied and tell the story of his causing the ax to float. The increase in the number of the "sons of the prophets" is worthy of notice. From the fact that the ax was borrowed, and the man who was using it was troubled at its loss on that account, may be drawn a lesson upon the care of the property of others. Keep in mind throughout the lesson the thought that God is interested in all we say and do, and that he is constantly taking care of us. The air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat, the shelter and clothing provided are all the gift of God, our heavenly Father.

Elisha defending Israel. The account of the bands of Syrians trying to entrap and overcome the army of Israel is interesting. Make it vivid by describing the plans of the Syrians to conceal themselves in certain places so as to attack the men of Israel unawares, and every time they did it, the men of Israel learned the secret plans of the Syrians and escaped. Tell how Elisha learned beforehand what the Syrians intended to do. The king of Syria thought there must be a traitor in his army who told the secrets to Israel, but he was mistaken.

Sought by enemies. Tell the children the reason why the king of Syria was so eager to capture Elisha, and how useless it was to try to take him when the Lord revealed to him what was going on in the Syrian army. Refer to the history of Elijah when his enemy was trying to capture him, and how he called down fire from heaven twice to destroy two different companies of men, and thus escaped. Tell the great preparation Benhadad made in his effort to arrest one man, sending a host of men with horses and chariots to surround by night the place where Elisha was, so that he might not escape. Why was Elisha's servant afraid?

Wonderfully delivered. Explain why the prophet had no fear. There was a marked difference between Elisha and his servant in this respect. Call attention to the difference between the forces on Elisha's side and those on the side of Syria. Draw a line and on one side write at the top "Israel," and on the other "Syria," and under "Israel" write "Elisha and his servant," "a host of horses and chariots of fire," "Elisha's prayer and the answer" and "victory;" under "Syria" write "a great host," "a night march," "blindness" and "defeat." Refer to Daniel's escape from the den of lions, and the Hebrew children in the fiery furnace. Tell the children the victories they may gain.

The Syrian army captured. The Syrian army undertook to make a prisoner of one man, and that man took the entire army prisoners. It must have been an interesting sight to see the prophet and his servant leading the Syrian army twelve miles, and taking them straight into the city of Samaria, the capital of the kingdom of Israel.

LESSON III

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Apr. 10.—The resurrection morn.—John 20: 1-18. Tu.—The empty tomb.—Mark 16: 1-8. Wed.—The stone rolled back.—Matt. 28: 1-10. Th.—The walk to Emmaus.—Luke 24: 13-32. Fr.—Christ's appearances.—1 Cor. 15: 1-11. Sat.—Christ risen.—1 Cor. 15: 12-24. Su.—Victory over death.—1 Cor. 15: 50-58.

THE RESURRECTION MORN—Easter Lesson.—John 20: 1-18.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 15, 16)

SUPT.—1 The first day of the week cometh Ma'ry Mag'da-lene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.

School.—2 Then she runneth, and cometh to Si'mon Pe'ter, and to the other disciple, whom Je'sus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.

3 Pe'ter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre.

4 So they ran both together: and the other disciple did out-run Pe'ter, and came first to the sepulchre.

5 And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in.

6 Then cometh Si'mon Pe'ter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie,

7 And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.

8 Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.

9 For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.

10 Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

11 But Ma'ry stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,

12 And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Je'sus had lain.

13 And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

14 And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Je'sus standing, and knew not that it was Je'sus.

15 Je'sus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

16 Je'sus saith unto her, Ma'ry. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rab-bo'ni; which is to say, Master.

17 Je'sus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

18 Ma'ry Mag'da-lene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

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1 Now on the first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, while it was yet dark, unto the tomb, and seeth the stone taken away from the tomb. 2 She runneth therefore, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid him. 3 Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb. 4 And they ran both together: and the other disciple outran Peter, and came first to the tomb; 5 and stooping and looking in, he seeth the linen cloths lying; yet entered he not in. 6 Simon Peter therefore also cometh, following him, and entered into the tomb; and he beholdeth the linen cloths lying, 7 and the napkin, that was upon his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself. 8 Then entered in therefore the other disciple also, who came first to the tomb, and he saw, and believed. 9 For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. 10 So the disciples went away again unto their own home.

11 But Mary was standing without at the tomb weeping: so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; 12 and she beheldeth two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. 13 And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. 14 When she had thus said, she turned herself back, and beheldeth Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. 16 Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turneth herself, and saith unto him in Hebrew, Rabboni; which is to say, Teacher. 17 Jesus saith to her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father: but go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God. 18 Mary Magdalene cometh and telleth the disciples. I have seen the Lord; and that he had said these things unto her.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? **School.**—The Lord is risen indeed. Luke 24: 34.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—The basis of our faith in Christianity is the resurrection of Christ.

TOPIC.—Victories of Easter day.

OUTLINE.—I. The visit to the sepulcher. II. Jesus appears to Mary.

TIME.—Sunday morning, April 9, A. D. 30.

PLACE.—Jerusalem, near Calvary.

PARALLEL ACCOUNTS.—Matt. 28: 1-10; Mark 16: 1-8; Luke 24: 1-12.

INTRODUCTION.—It is eminently fitting that we should turn aside from the study of the history of Israel to consider the greatest miracle of the ages, the resurrection of our Lord, since upon that stupendous fact rests the structure of the Christian system. The disciples were slow to believe that Christ had risen from the dead, as is shown by Mark's account (16: 11-13), but the evidence became so strong that even the most unbelieving one, Thomas, accepted the resurrection as an established fact, and all devoted themselves, at the

risk of their lives, to the declaration of that truth. By comparing and combining the accounts of the resurrection as given by the four writers of the Gospels the following appears to have been the order of events: The women approached the tomb, Mary Magdalene in advance, early in the morning; Mary Magdalene, seeing the stone rolled away from the door of the tomb, hastened to tell Peter and John; the other women arrived during Mary's absence; Peter and John arrived at the tomb, looked in and found it empty; Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene, and later to the other women; the women reported to the disciples that they had seen the Lord.

COMMENTARY.—I. THE VISIT TO THE SEPULCHER (vs. 1-10). 1. the first day of the week—The body of Jesus was placed in the tomb before sunset on Friday and lay there until very early on Sunday morning. A part of Friday, the whole of Saturday and a part of Sunday were together, according to Jewish usage, called three days. **Mary Magdalene**—She was most earnestly devoted to the Master, and it appears that her zeal

led her to reach the tomb in advance of the other women. Their mission was to embalm the body of Jesus. **yet dark**—Before daylight. **the sepulchre**—It was the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, who had requested the Roman officer to permit him to provide for the burial of the body of our Lord. **the stone taken away**—The women had inquired, as they were on the way to the sepulcher, who should roll away the stone (Mark 16: 3). The opening into the tomb was like a door in a wall of rock, which was covered by a large stone, like a millstone. In Matt. 28: 2 we read that an angel rolled the stone away. **2. runneth**—In her disappointment in not finding the body of Jesus she hastened to inform the disciples of the loss as she regarded it. **the other disciple, whom Jesus loved**—From this and other passages it is clear that it was John himself.

3. came to the sepulchre—The two disciples hastened to the tomb with the hope of finding some clue that would lead to the recovery of the body. **4. did outrun Peter**—This verse shows the anxiety of the disciples in this matter. **5. yet went he not in**—John was able to see the interior of the tomb without entering, and he saw the grave-clothes, but not the body of Jesus. Reverence for his Lord may have kept him from entering. **6. Peter. . . . went into the sepulchre**—Peter was too impetuous to stop outside. This was in keeping with his disposition from the time he first became a disciple of Jesus. **7. wrapped together in a place by itself**—A sign of the resurrection. If a friend had removed the body he would not have stripped it. If an enemy had stolen it he would not have taken the trouble to remove the napkin and lay it in a place by itself.—*Chrysostom*. The whole was as if a sleeper had risen from his couch, arranged the clothes and departed.—*Whedon*. There was no indication of violence or haste. **8. he saw, and believed**—As reverence at first kept John at a respectful distance from where the body of Jesus had lain, so faith, upon a more complete understanding of conditions within the tomb, led him to enter and to believe that the body of Jesus had not been taken from the tomb, but that Jesus had risen from the dead. "Probably he means, though he does not say, that he believed in the Lord's resurrection more immediately and certainly than Peter."—*J., F. & B.* John's love, the love of a nature strong, deep and spiritual beyond all, is blessed with the highest gift, the gift of faith before he sees the Lord.—*Moulton*. **9. they knew not the scripture**—We can but admire the faith of John in the resurrection of Christ, in the absence of an understanding of the scripture which foretold that resurrection. Our Lord had told them that he would suffer death and rise again the third day, but the disciples had failed to comprehend his meaning. John's faith was sublime. He lived so close to the heart of his Master that faith seems to have been inspired in his heart.

II. JESUS APPEARS TO MARY (vs. 11-18).

11. Mary stood. . . . weeping—She remained after the disciples had gone away. Her sorrow at the loss of her Lord's body found expression in tears. Her devotion to Jesus was deep, but her faith was not as strong as John's. "Peter and John's going commend Mary's staying. To the grave she came before them, from the grave she went to tell them, to the grave she returns with them, at the grave she remains behind them. To stay while others stay is the world's love. To stay when all are gone is constant love."—*Strain*. **12. seeth two angels**—Her love led her to look at the place where Jesus had lain.

"Matthew and Mark mention but one angel, probably that one only that spoke."—*Clarke*. **one at the head, etc.**—In the most holy place the cherubim were placed at each end of the mercy-seat. See Exod. 25: 18, 19. Jesus was crucified between two thieves, but two angels guarded his body in the tomb. **13. woman**—A respectful manner of address. **why weepest thou**—Had she understood that Christ had risen, there would have been no tears of sorrow.

14. she turned herself back—It may have been simply changing her position from stooping down to look into the tomb to the one she had previously assumed, but Meyer thinks that she was "led by some slight movement behind, or perhaps, as Chrysostom finely supposes, because of some expression of love and awe which passed over the angel faces." **knew not that it was Jesus**—Mary was looking for the body of her Master whom she believed to be dead, and not for her risen Lord. It seems that the thought of his resurrection had not entered her mind. She did not pay particular attention to the personage who was there, because of the intense grief of her soul. "She was therefore every way unprepared to recognize the person of our Lord."—*Clarke*. **15. woman, why weepest thou**—The first words of our Lord after his resurrection were addressed to one of his most devoted followers and brought comfort to her sorrowing heart. **the gardener**—Mary had not yet carefully observed Jesus, and thought he was the man who had charge of the grounds containing the tomb. **I will take him away**—Her love for Jesus led her to desire possession of his body, and her devotion declared she was able to carry it.

16. Jesus saith unto her, Mary—Her acts and words of devotion had won their way, and Jesus spoke her name, and spoke it with such tenderness, that she at once recognized him. **turned**—She had not been looking toward him whom she supposed was the gardener, but upon hearing the voice of Jesus she at once turned toward him. **Rabboni**—This title existed in Jewish schools in three forms: Rab, master, the lowest degree of honor; Rabbi, my master, of higher dignity; Rabboni, my great master, the most honorable of all.—*Robinson*. **17. touch me not**—She had the testimony of two of her senses, sight and hearing, that it was the Lord; and she now seeks the testimony of a third, namely, of feeling, in order to be sure that it is a body and not a pure spirit which addresses her. Our Lord forbids her touch, that she may not lose the honor of her preeminence of faith.—*Whedon*. **go**—She was at once sent forth as a witness. **to my brethren**—Bishop Hall remarks that they were at first servants, then disciples, then friends, and after the resurrection, brethren. **I ascend**—He had his resurrection body, but was still on earth. He would soon ascend to glory. **to my God, and your God**—"A tender intimation that even on high he is their divine brother." **18. told the disciples**—She instantly obeyed her Lord's command. The gladness of her own heart prompted her to make the good news known to the others. The disciples did not believe her words (Mark 16: 11; Luke 24: 11).

QUESTIONS.—For what reasons is the doctrine of the resurrection an important one? Who went early to the tomb of our Lord? How long had the body of Jesus lain in the tomb? What did Mary say to Peter and John as she met them? What did Peter find as he entered the tomb? When Mary looked into the sepulcher what did she see? Describe the appearing of Christ to her. Upon what errand did Christ send Mary?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. The turning aside from the study of Old Testament history to consider the subject of Christ's resurrection. 2. Prophecies concerning the resurrection. 3. Note the importance of the doctrine of the resurrection. 4. The benefits of Christ's resurrection. (1) Shows his divinity. (2) Salvation for those who believe. (3) A glorious resurrection for those who die in Christ.

II. THEME.—Christ's resurrection.

III. CHRIST IN THE TOMB.—1. Evidences of Christ's death. (1) His appearance showed it. (2) The Roman soldiers pronounced him dead. (3) The spear-thrust made doubt as to his death unreasonable. 2. The body placed in Joseph's tomb. 3. Precautions taken to provide against the body's being taken away. (1) The official seal. (2) The official guard. 4. The body embalmed. 5. The length of time the body lay in the tomb.

IV. CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS AT THE TOMB.—1. The coming of Mary Magdalene in advance of the other women. 2. The purpose of their coming. 3. Their devotion to their Master. 4. The reason for their not coming on the Jewish Sabbath. The law forbade labor on the Sabbath. 5. The devotion of this sorrowing band, especially that of the women. 6. Their sadness was the result of a lack of an understanding of Christ's words about his rising again.

V. THE MYSTERY OF THE EMPTY TOMB.—1. The absence of the guard. 2. The stone rolled away. 3. Mary's haste to tell Peter and John. 4. The entrance of Peter and John into the tomb. 5. The effect upon John of what he saw in the tomb. 6. Mary's sight of the angels, and their words to her. 7. The Jewish council's explanation of the empty tomb.

VI. CHRIST'S APPEARING TO MARY.—1. Mary earnestly sought the body of Jesus. 2. Her words to the angels and to him whom she supposed was the gardener. 3. Jesus revealing himself to Mary. 4. Earnest search for Jesus is always rewarded. 5. The disciples went away to their own home, but Mary stayed to search for her Lord.

VII. THE GOOD NEWS TOLD.—1. Mary had previously gone to tell the disciples of the absence of Jesus' body, now she went to tell them that she had seen him alive. 2. She went in response to Jesus' command. 3. The significance of the expression, "Go to my brethren." 4. The message was later taken up by the disciples and declared far and wide.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Victories of Easter day.

- I. Christ's triumph over death accomplished.
- II. Devotion, courage and patience rewarded.
- III. Doubts dispelled and faith established.

I. Christ's triumph over death accomplished. "The first day of the week" is full of memories of redemption. The Christian Sabbath blends the memories of creative and redemptive love. The finished victory of Christ over the world and the kingdom of darkness and his manifestation in the circle of his disciples, banishing their grief and unbelief makes the first day memorable as the true Christian's Easter day. It was the divine purpose that Jesus should rise from the dead. It was so declared in the Old Testament scriptures. Jesus himself on several occasions foretold his resurrection to his disciples. His resurrection affords the most decisive testimony to the divine character of his person and mission. Christ arose to ascend. The gospel of the open grave is the story of the resurrection

and the prediction of the ascension combined. Neither unbelief, military force nor determined resistance effected anything. The glorious victory was achieved and the resurrection of Christ became the foundation of Christian faith.

II. Devotion, courage and patience rewarded. Though the difficulty which Mary anticipated was removed in finding the stone rolled away, she regarded her loss as even greater because the grave was empty. It would not have helped her had she found the buried One there. The very absence of the body which made Mary weep was a cause of joy for herself and all mankind. Mary's devotion, courage and patience were not to be ignored. It was a brave thing to acknowledge fealty to the crucified Christ and adherence to his hated cause, to stand before soldier and Pharisee in hostile Jerusalem as a follower of Jesus Christ. Nicodemus was not equal to it. Peter had quailed before a maid-servant, but Mary never hid her colors nor forgot her Master. Her spices, her tears, her watch and her appeals published her fidelity and her creed. Others came and looked and went away but Mary held to the spot by a love that knew no release. She stationed herself even to the point of isolation. She wept alone. Love is supremely indifferent to criticism. Mary was determined to know the truth. She questioned angels and the supposed gardener. Mary mistook the divine work for man's. She thought only of the adversaries of God. The thought had not occurred to her that the Lord might have taken himself away. The idea of death having been turned into life never occurred to her. Observe Mary's answer to Christ as contrasted with her answer to the angels. There was sympathy in his tone of inquiry, "Why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?" These are the first recorded words of Christ after his resurrection. Jesus went to his death amid weeping women. On his rising he met a little company of them. His first words were to the weeping Mary. He who was born of woman came to dry woman's tears. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." Neither Gethsemane, the cross nor the grave had changed Christ's voice. No voice could say "Mary" like his. How much of tenderness and revelation he put into that word. In a moment Mary was lifted from anguish into ecstasy.

III. Doubts dispelled and faith established. The dispensation of divine light is different in different minds. Mary saw in her dire need what Peter and John did not see,—two angels. They gained their comfort by an act of direct faith and returned to their homes. Regardless of personal comfort and animated by holy love Mary tarried until a full revelation should be given her. Christ's gentle reproof pointed to the lack of spirituality in Mary's faith. To make her his messenger of such tidings was a more blessed recognition of her love than to have welcomed her touch. "My Father, and your Father," are words which show the triumph of Jesus Christ and the triumph of the Christian. T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

<p>THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST IS THE GREATEST FACT OF HISTORY.</p>	<p><i>THE LORD IS RISEN</i></p>	<p>THIS HOPE ROBS THE GRAVE OF ITS TERROR.</p>
<p>WELL ESTABLISHED: OUR RESURRECTION IS ASSURED.</p>		<p>IT IS AN INCENTIVE TO A HOLY LIFE. IT THRILLS THE SOUL WITH JOY.</p>

Practical Applications

The resurrection of Christ is the corner-stone of the gospel (1 Cor. 15: 1-4); the central truth of Christianity (1 Cor. 15: 14, 17); the confirmation of the scriptures (Luke 24: 46); the comfort of the bereaved (1 Thess. 4: 14, 18; 1 Cor. 15: 52); the proof of sonship (Rom. 8: 1, 4); the seal of immortality (Rom. 6: 9); the promise of our resurrection (John 14: 19). "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Heb. 10: 22) and consider:

The seekers. They were Mary Magdalene (v. 1), out of whom Jesus cast seven demons and to whom he first appeared after his resurrection (vs. 9, 18; Mark 16: 9); Mary, wife of Alphaeus (Matt. 10: 3); and mother of James the less and of Joseph (Mark 15: 40); and Salome, wife of Zebedee (Matt. 27: 56), who desired of Jesus that her two sons, James and John, might sit on his right and left hand in his kingdom (Matt. 20: 20, 23). The Marys stood by Christ's cross (Matt. 27: 55; John 19: 25), and sat by his sepulcher (Matt. 27: 61). The three followed Jesus in Galilee and ministered unto him (Mark 15: 41).

The shining ones. "Two angels in white" (v. 12). Angels announced Christ's birth (Luke 2: 10); sustained him after his temptation (Matt. 4: 11); strengthened him in Gethsemane (Luke 22: 43); two men stood by his sepulcher (Luke 24: 4) and comforted his disciples at his ascension (Acts 1: 10). God has different messengers: men (Acts 1: 10), angels (John 20: 12), archangels (1 Thess. 4: 16; Jude 9), ministers (Psa. 103: 21; Heb. 1: 7), seraphim (Isa. 6: 6) and cherubim (Ezek. 10: 15, 16, 19). They differ in name, rank and glory.

The Savior. 1. Risen. "She...saw Jesus standing" (v. 14). A Christian gentleman stood before an art store, looking at a picture of the crucifixion. A lad approached and gazed also at the picture. The gentleman turned to the street Arab and said, pointing to the picture, "Do you know who it is?" "Yes," was the quick reply, "that's our Savior." Then with a mingled look of pity and surprise that the man did not know what the picture represented, and a desire to enlighten him further, he continued, "Them's the soldiers, the Roman soldiers, and," with a deep sigh, "that woman crying is his mother." He waited a moment for further questioning, then thrust his hands in his pockets and with a reverent, subdued voice, added, "They killed him, Mister. Yes, sir; they killed him!" The gentleman looked at the dirty, ragged, little fellow and asked, "Where did you learn this?" "At the mission school." The gentleman resumed his walk, leaving the lad looking at the picture. He had not gone a block when he heard in childish treble, "Mister! say, Mister!" He turned. The boy raised his little hand and in a triumphant tone, shouted, "I wanted to tell you he rose again! Yes, Mister; he rose again." His message delivered, he smiled, waved his hand and went his way. 2. Reassuring. "Great joy" (Matt. 28: 8). "Jesus met them, saying, All hail" (Matt. 28: 9). Jesus saw them and spoke to them first. He always calls us before we recognize him. "Be not afraid" (Matt. 28: 10). These words were especially appropriate now that he was "alive for evermore."

The sent ones. "Go to my brethren" (v. 17). Not a matter of option but of obligation. If I follow my Lord's command I can not stay. I am compelled to "go" daily in spirit, in prayer, in giving, and really in person, when he opens the way. Christ commands it. "The Spirit urges it. The church echoes it. The Golden Rule requires it. Open doors invite it. Results warrant it. The judgment will demand an account of it. The rewards of eternity await it. The perishing plead for it." A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—Christ arose from the dead.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

CHRIST IS RISEN

MARY'S { Devotion
Reward
Mission

The meaning of Easter. This is the time of year that the Christian world celebrates the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Give some illustration that shows how plants and trees appear to come to life in the spring. They are not dead but look as if they were. Christ was really dead. The oak-tree loses its leaves in the fall or winter and looks bare and dead. The grass is frozen and becomes gray through the cold winter, and the fields look barren and desolate. In the spring with its rains and warm sunshine, the trees and the grass begin to show life again, and soon are green and beautiful. There are some trees in the forest that do not put forth any leaves, and it is because they are dead. Jesus really died and was placed in a tomb, but on the third day he arose from the dead, and is still alive. To-day we remember thankfully the fact of his resurrection.

Mary's love and devotion. Tell the story briefly of the body of Jesus being placed in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, and how the body was prepared for burial, just before sunset on Friday evening. Describe the tomb with its stone door, and tell how carefully it was sealed and guarded. Tell of Mary's resting on the Jewish Sabbath and going before daylight on Sunday morning to the tomb, where she and other women were expecting to anoint the body of Jesus. It was love for her Master that led Mary to such earnest action. She showed her devotion by remaining after the disciples had gone away to make further search and inquiry for her Lord's body.

Mary's reward. Mary did not think of such a thing as Christ's being alive. Picture to the children her surprise to hear Jesus speak to her when she thought she was talking with the gardener. Jesus is near when our need is great and our cry to him is sincere. Picture her astonishment as she saw him alive, when she believed him to be dead. Tell about the raising to life of the son of the widow of Zarephath or the restoration of the Shunammite's son. These were raised to life by the power of God through the agency of the prophets, but Christ arose by his own power, showing himself to be the Son of God and divine. Can we realize how great was Mary's joy when she found her Master alive?

Mary's mission. Those who find Jesus have a work given them to do. Mary's mission was to go and tell others that Jesus had risen from the dead. Call attention to the difference in Mary's feelings as she went to the tomb and as she went away at Jesus' command to declare his resurrection. Tell how eager those who have found Jesus are to try to bring others to him. A little girl sought and found Jesus and she was able by her earnestness and simplicity to lead her father to find him also. Let your effort be to impress upon the hearts of the children the great fact that Christ is alive and is willing and ready and able to save us all from our sins.

LESSON IV

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Apr. 17.—Joash repairs the temple.—2 Kings 11: 21-12: 16. Tu.—Ingratitude of Joash.—2 Chron. 24: 15-22. Wed.—Bad ending.—2 Kings 12: 17-21. Th.—Bad end of Saul.—1 Sam. 31: 1-13. Fr.—End of Samson.—Judg. 16: 1-31. Sat.—Manasseh.—2 Chron. 33: 1-20. Su.—A godly life.—2 Kings 22: 1, 2; 23: 21-30.

JOASH REPAIRS THE TEMPLE.—2 Kings 11: 21-12: 16. Print 12: 4-15.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verse 11)

SUPT.—4 And Je-ho'ash said to the priests, All the money of the dedicated things that is brought into the house of the Lord, even the money of every one that passeth the account, the money that every man is set at, and all the money that cometh into any man's heart to bring into the house of the Lord,

School.—5 Let the priests take it to them, every man of his acquaintance; and let them repair the breaches of the house, wheresoever any breach shall be found.

6 But it was so, that in the three and twentieth year of king Je-ho'ash the priests had not repaired the breaches of the house.

7 Then king Je-ho'ash called for Je-hoi'a-da the priest, and the other priests, and said unto them, Why repair ye not the breaches of the house? now therefore receive no more money of your acquaintance, but deliver it for the breaches of the house.

8 And the priests consented to receive no more money of the people, neither to repair the breaches of the house.

9 But Je-hoi'a-da the priest took a chest, and bored a hole in the lid of it, and set it beside the altar, on the right side as one cometh into the house of the Lord: and the priests that kept the door put therein all the money that was brought into the house of the Lord.

10 And it was so, when they saw that there was much money in the chest, that the king's scribe and the high priest came up, and they put up in bags, and told the money that was found in the house of the Lord.

11 And they gave the money, being told, into the hands of them that did the work, that had the oversight of the house of the Lord: and they laid it out to the carpenters and builders, that wrought upon the house of the Lord,

12 And to masons, and hewers of stone, and to buy timber and hewed stone to repair the breaches of the house of the Lord, and for all that was laid out for the house to repair it.

13 Howbeit there were not made for the house of the Lord bowls of silver, snuffers, basons, trumpets, any vessels of gold, or vessels of silver, of the money that was brought into the house of the Lord:

14 But they gave that to the workmen, and repaired therewith the house of the Lord.

15 Moreover they reckoned not with the men, into whose hand they delivered the money to be bestowed on workmen: for they dealt faithfully.

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4 And Jehoash said to the priests, All the money of the hallowed things that is brought into the house of Jehovah, in current money, the money of the persons for whom each man is rated, and all the money that it cometh into any man's heart to bring into the house of Jehovah, 5 let the priests take it to them, every man from his acquaintance; and they shall repair the breaches of the house, wheresoever any breach shall be found. 6 But it was so, that in the three and twentieth year of king Jehoash the priests had not repaired the breaches of the house, 7 Then king Jehoash called for Jehoiada the priest, and for the other priests, and said unto them, Why repair ye not the breaches of the house? now therefore take no more money from your acquaintance, but deliver it for the breaches of the house. 8 And the priests consented that they should take no more money from the people, neither repair the breaches of the house.

9 But Jehoiada the priest took a chest, and bored a hole in the lid of it, and set it beside the altar, on the right side as one cometh into the house of Jehovah; and the priests that kept the threshold put therein all the money that was brought into the house of Jehovah. 10 And it was so, when they saw that there was much money in the chest, that the king's scribe and the high priest came up, and they put up in bags and counted the money that was found in the house of Jehovah. 11 And they gave the money that was weighed out into the hands of them that did the work, that had the oversight of the house of Jehovah; and they paid it out to the carpenters and the builders, that wrought upon the house of Jehovah, 12 and to the masons and the hewers of stone, and for buying timber and hewn stone to repair the breaches of the house of Jehovah, and for all that was laid out for the house to repair it. 13 But there were not made for the house of Jehovah cups of silver, snuffers, basins, trumpets, any vessels of gold, or vessels of silver, of the money that was brought into the house of Jehovah; 14 for they gave that to them that did the work, and repaired therewith the house of Jehovah. 15 Moreover they reckoned not with the men, into whose hand they delivered the money to give to them that did the work; for they dealt faithfully.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly. 1 Chron. 29: 9.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—The Lord's work should be of first importance with us.

TOPIC.—Difficulties in reform work.

OUTLINE.—I. Joash and Jehoiada. II. An attempt to repair the temple. III. The work completed.

TIME.—Joash began to reign B. C. 878.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PARALLEL ACCOUNT.—2 Chron. 24: 1-14.

READ.—2 Kings 12, 17.

INTRODUCTION.—Our lesson carries us away from the study of Israel, which has engaged our attention for several weeks, to that of Judah. Jehoshaphat was succeeded by Jehoram, his son, who formed an alliance with Ahab by making Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, his wife, and thus opened wide the way for Baal-worship in Judah. Jehoram was ambitious and unscrupulous, and under his administration the nation

was far from prosperous. At his death, after a reign of eight years, Ahaziah, his son, ascended the throne, but his reign was brief. He joined Jehoram, king of Israel, in a war against Hazael, king of Syria, was wounded in battle, and died after reigning one year. At his death Athaliah, his mother, aspiring to become Judah's ruler, slew all the heirs to the throne, as she supposed, and controlled the government for six years. Joash, the youngest son of Ahaziah, had, however, been rescued by his father's sister, Jehosheba, from the slaughter undertaken by his grandmother, Athaliah, and had been hidden in the temple during these six years. His rescuer was the wife of Jehoiada, the high priest. When Joash was seven years old, he was made king by the people, under the leadership of Jehoiada, and the cruel Athaliah was put to death. Since the death of Jehoshaphat the worship of Baal had flourished, and the worship of Jehovah had been correspondingly neglected. The temple had fallen into decay. Stanley says, "The temple became a quarry for the rival sanctuary. The stones and the sacred vessels were employed to build or to adorn the temple of Baal, which rose, as it would seem, even within the temple precincts, with

its circle of statues, and its sacred altars." Under the influence of Jehoiada, who undertook the task of bringing about a reform in Judah, the people made a covenant "that they should be the Lord's" (2 Kings 11:17), and went about the destruction of Baal-worship with devotion and zeal.

COMMENTARY.—I. JOASH AND JEHOIADA (vs. 21-12: 3). Upon Jehoiada rested a grave responsibility in directing the affairs of the kingdom as guide and instructor of the seven-year-old king of Judah. Joash was the youngest king that ever reigned over Judah, the only one approaching him in youthfulness being Josiah, who began to reign at the age of eight years. Jehoiada's training was effective in that Joash under his guidance did "right in the sight of the Lord," yet "the high places were not taken away" (v. 3). "This sacrificing in high places was not idolatry; they worshipped Jehovah, the true God, on elevated spots, and therefore by the high places so frequently mentioned we must not understand idolatrous shrines."—*Whedon*. There was great danger of this worship becoming idolatrous from its resemblance to heathen customs. Jerusalem was designed to be the true center of religious worship.

II. AN ATTEMPT TO REPAIR THE TEMPLE (vs. 4-8). 4. **Jehoash**—Another form of Joash (2 Kings 11:2). **said to the priests**—The important work of collecting money for repairing the temple was committed to the priests. Joash must have been more than a mere child at the time he gave this order to the priests. He probably was a man grown. **all the money of the dedicated things**—This includes whatever was devoted to sacred uses. Money was not coined at that time, but the gold and silver were valued according to their weight. The latter clauses of this verse indicate the three sources of revenue for the support of the religious system among the Jews. **the money of every one that passeth the account**—Rather, "that passeth the numbering," as in R. V., margin. This was the half-shekel required of all the men from twenty years old and upward, excepting old men and the Levites (Exod. 30:12-16; Num. 1:42, 45, 47), and was equivalent to about thirty-two cents. **the money that every man is set at**—The amount paid into the treasury of the temple in connection with special vows and estimated according to Lev. 27:1-8. **cometh into any man's heart**—Free-will offerings. 5. **every man of his acquaintance**—From this verse and from 2 Chron. 24:5 it seems clear that the priests and Levites were directed to go throughout Judah collecting money for repairing the temple. **repair the breaches of the house**—The temple had been the home of Joash in his childhood, and he had opportunity to observe its condition. It had been neglected for years, and had been broken up by the sons of Athaliah (2 Chron. 24:7).

6. **in the three and twentieth year**—Joash was then thirty years old, and his command must have been given to the priests eight or ten years before this. We have no means of knowing exactly. **the priests had not repaired**—The money that was collected was used for the support of the priests and the temple service, and nothing was used to make the repairs ordered by Joash. It is probable that the income was not large owing to the prevalence of idolatry and the lack of earnestness on the part of the priests and Levites. 7. **called for Jehoiada**—The high priest was old and possibly indifferent as to the condition of the house of the Lord, having been long accustomed to its dilapidated state. Since he had full charge of this work it was proper that he should be called to account for his neglect. **receive no more**—Their

commission was withdrawn, and no more money for repairs was to be entrusted to them, and they were to hand over to others whatever might be on hand for the purpose. 8. **consented**—Their work in connection with the repairing of the temple was at an end. The first attempt of Joash to accomplish a praiseworthy and very necessary task was a failure.

III. THE WORK COMPLETED (vs. 9-16). 9. **took a chest**—This was done by Jehoiada "at the king's commandment" (2 Chron. 24:8). The chest with a hole bored in the lid to admit the money was the receptacle for the special repair fund. The contributions went through the hands of the priests and there is no intimation that they had acted dishonestly at any time. **brought into the house of the Lord**—It was expected that the people would give more when the collection was appointed for the special purpose of repairing the temple, than when they were to give the legal and voluntary payments only to the priests, whereby no giver knew how much of it might be applied for the building.—*Keil*. 10. **much money in the chest**—People are more free to give when they are assured that the cause is worthy, and their gifts are for a specific purpose, and the money will be devoted strictly to that object. **told the money**—"Counted the money."—R. V. The high priest and the king's secretary took official charge of the money, weighing it and placing it in bags, sealed, and with the amount indicated upon it. 11. **into the hands of them that did the work**—A careful system was carried out in the prosecution of the enterprise. The money was handed over by those in authority to those entrusted with making the repairs. **they laid it out, etc.**—"Paid it out."—R. V. 12. **to buy timber and hewed stone**—The expressions in this and the preceding verses indicate to what extent the temple had fallen into decay in the one hundred fifty years since it was built.

13. **there were not made for the house of the Lord, etc.**—In the parallel account in 2 Chron. 24, it is stated that vessels were made for the service of the house of the Lord, but not until after the temple had been repaired, and the surplus was used for that purpose. Athaliah's sons had robbed the temple of its "dedicated things" (2 Chron. 24:7) and used them for the worship of Baalim. 14. **gave that to the workmen**—The repairing of the house of the Lord was not hindered by a lack of funds, for the money was placed at the disposal of the workmen until the repairs were completed. It is a desolate sight to see the house of God going to ruin, and it is an encouraging sight to see the people taking a hearty interest in keeping it in good repair. "The labors of all, from the king to the humblest carpenter, were essential to the success of the great undertaking. It is not for any worker in the Lord's cause to say he has of himself done any good thing. At the best he is only one of the many agents in the perfecting of God's plans."—*Trumbull*. 15. **dealt faithfully**—Such men were entrusted with this important work as were conscientious, active and had the welfare of the cause of God at heart.

QUESTIONS.—How old was Joash when he was made king? What was his character? Who was the high priest and what influence did he have over the young king? Who decided that the temple must be repaired? How long had it been since the temple was built? What was the first plan for raising the needed funds? What ways of raising money are mentioned in verse 4? What was the second plan for raising money? Why was this more successful? How was the money counted? How paid out? What practical truths are taught in this lesson?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. An outline history of Judah from Jehoshaphat to Joash. 2. Relations between Judah and Israel by the marriage of Jehoram, king of Judah, and Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. 3. The spread of idolatrous worship. 4. The ancestry of Joash. (1) Athaliah was his grandmother. (2) Ahab and Jezebel were great grandparents. 5. The preservation of Joash. 6. The relation between Joash and Jehoiada. The king was a nephew of Jehoiada's wife.

II. THEME.—The blessedness of having a part in the Lord's work.

III. A GREAT NEED IN JUDAH.—1. The influence of the wicked Athaliah was manifest. 2. The house of the Lord had fallen into decay through neglect. 3. The continued existence of shrines in the high places. 4. The need for faithful, devoted men. 5. A study of Joash. (1) Young. (2) Under the good influences of Jehosheba and Jehoiada. (3) A desire for the reformation of the nation. (4) His weakness shown by his fall after the death of Jehoiada. 6. A study of Jehoiada. (1) A pious, faithful man. (2) His opportunity. The training of a king. 7. Both the king and the high priest saw the need of a reformation.

IV. AN ATTEMPT AND A FAILURE.—1. The priests were the most natural agents through whom to accomplish the reform. 2. The three sources of revenue for the temple service. 3. The delay of several years in getting at the work. 4. The failure was due to the inactivity of the priests and to the indefiniteness of the plan. 5. The priests were not ready to use for repairing the temple what seemed necessary for their support.

V. A GREAT SUCCESS.—1. Because one plan failed it was not necessary to suppose that success was impossible. 2. The advantages of the second plan over the first. (1) There was a specific object that invited contributions. (2) The repair fund was wholly separate from the moneys contributed for the temple service. (3) The people had confidence that the funds would be wisely appropriated. 3. The need of exercising great care in the use of funds raised for religious or charitable purposes. 4. The funds counted and properly placed. 5. The faithfulness of the workmen.

VI. THE VALUE OF COOPERATION.—1. The king or the high priest alone could not do the work. 2. The humblest Jew could have a part in the great work. 3. The work of the Lord has claims upon every one. 4. God's people are united and in earnest for the advancement of his cause.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Difficulties in reform work.

- I. Arise from compromise.
- II. Arise from lack of leadership.
- III. Are overcome by united effort.

I. Arise from compromise. "The high places were not taken away." At the time when Joash became king the people were morally almost as corrupt as the heathen nations, yet they were unanimous in their acceptance of a new king. The tide was with Joash and his opportunity was great for general reform. The people were readily animated with hatred against idolatry from the experience they had had of it in Athaliah's reign. They were enthusiastic in their return to the worship of Jehovah. They inaugurated the restoration of the line of David by a new covenant with God and by zealous acts of reform. The first work of Joash and

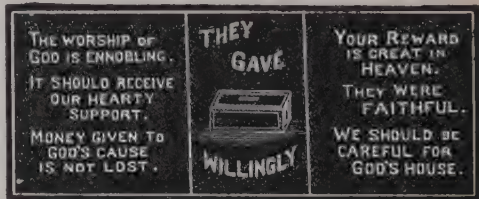
Jehoiada was to pull down the temple of Baal and destroy the images, and slay the priest of Baal. Their next plan was to repair the temple of the Lord, but a period of years showed a lack of success. The people had not obeyed orders. The work was still undone. What had the people been doing? "The people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places." As long as they could continue thus to compromise they were not exercised about the condition of the temple. Familiarity with those places had made them less objectionable. Relief from a cruel ruler had quieted their troubles. They were not deeply enough moved or thoroughly enough reformed to assist in carrying out the king's orders. The piety of Jehoiada had done much, but the people were responsible for the carrying out of their vows and obligations. There was a divine order for them to follow, but they did not look for God's plan in their proceedings. They settled down for twenty-three years instead of beginning at once to do their part in the great cause of reformation.

II. Arise from lack of leadership. Circumstances test men. Joash had covenanted at his inauguration to rule according to the law of the Lord, and yet while reforming the worship of the temple, the high places were not removed according to law. To understand Joash we must remember his lineage. Heredity did little for his good but much against the formation of a strong character. His real character was not understood while Jehoiada lived. In his youth Joash was fortunate to have a guide and support and guardian in the priest Jehoiada. He had a careful training and an excellent opportunity. Notwithstanding all this he lacked independence of judgment, firmness of will and true surrender of heart to God. He was zealous for the externals of religion, yet his history proves the vital difference between godliness that is the result of circumstances and that which is the product of internal principle. Man may constrain to a temporary amendment, but God alone can control to a lasting change of character and heart. Nothing but the grace of God and the love of his name and his truth could produce that piety of heart which Joash needed to enable him to withstand temptation when his earthly prop was gone. Lacking this, Joash could but be weak among his people. We are not told of his personal standing among them, but we know that clear and consistent personal piety is always a persuasive thing, and had it been manifest in him we may safely conclude the people would not have resorted to the high places for worship. A weak leader may not expect his people to live on a higher plane than his example sets.

III. Are overcome by united effort. Just what brought Joash to diligent effort we are not told, but he should have full credit for the one luminous work of his whole reign, the repair of the temple. God gave him skill for the work and means were provided. Difficulties vanished as he followed the divine plan.

T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise



Practical Applications

"Jehoash did that which was right" (v. 2). Joash did what was right while Jehoiaada instructed him. A bad adviser would have early proved his ruin. We can help others by encouraging words. A young teacher, coming wearied and discouraged from her day's work, saw by the roadside two of her little pupils. One had failed in her lessons that day, and was weeping bitterly. The other wiped away the tears of the grieved one, and said sweetly, "Try once more, and I will help you." Unnoticed by the little ones, their teacher passed on, her soul strengthened by the words of childish wisdom and the sight of tender sympathy.

"Why repair ye not the breaches of the house?" (v. 7). Solomon's temple, built and beautified at such immense cost, had fallen into decay. Money was needed to repair it. There is many a church whose walls are decaying, whose worship is a thing of the past. "Joash was minded to repair the house of the Lord" (2 Chron. 24:4), but the priests, who should have been intensely interested, seemed rather indifferent and he takes them to task about it. If there is need of earnestness in regard to temporal affairs, how much more is it necessary respecting our spiritual well-being. A lady stood, at the close of a service, conversing with a poor man in reference to his soul's salvation. "Not to-night," was his repeated answer. But she pressed him. Again and again would he have turned away, but she held him. It was after ten o'clock and still she pleaded with him. At length, he yielded, and together they knelt and prayed for his pardon. When he rose from his knees there was a happy smile on his face, as he said, "I am saved." They parted. The next morning word was brought to the lady that the man had died of heart disease at twelve o'clock, less than two hours after he had left her.

"The priest took a chest, and bored a hole in the lid....and set it beside the altar" (v. 9). It is said that more money is spent annually for chewing gum than for foreign missions. One hundred times as much is spent for tobacco as for the heathen. Nearly two hundred times as much is spent for liquor to ruin the world as is spent for the gospel to save it. Women pay more for feathers and flowers than to save the world. If men professing Christianity would abstain from tobacco, and women from feathers and flowers and devote the money to missions, the glad tidings might be sent to every dark corner in the world.

"They gave....and repaired therewith the house of the Lord" (v. 14). "A cold, indifferent people will not be greatly interested in their house of worship, while a church where warm and zealous love prevails, will care for the holy place with as much enthusiasm as in providing for their homes." A great mistake is made by those who place their personal interests ahead of the interests of God's cause.

"They reckoned not with the men....for they dealt faithfully" (v. 15). "A man diligent in his business....shall stand before kings" (Prov. 22:29), so a Christian man who is faithful in his work both for God and his fellow men shall be accounted "worthy....to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36). "If I was only sure that it is right!" whispered Sam after he had finished his sum and was about to take it up to the teacher. "Pooh!" whispered Dick; "take it up. She's too busy to look at it closely, and won't know whether it is right or not. That's the way to get along easy." "But," said Sam, "it isn't getting along easy that I'm after; it's being and doing right." A. O. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—There is a place for all in the work of the Lord.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

JOASH, THE BOY KING

THE KING
THE PRIESTS } Repaired the Temple
THE PEOPLE }

Joash, the boy king. Of all the lessons of this year thus far perhaps this one appeals the most strongly to the minds of the children. It will be very necessary to become familiar with the history just preceding the lesson. There are several persons connected with the crowning of Joash king. Tell the story of Athaliah's ambition to rule Judah, and of her cruelty in destroying her own grandchildren. Tell how the one-year-old Joash was rescued by his aunt, Jehosheba, and the baby boy and the nurse were hidden in the temple for six years. One could refer to the preservation of the child Moses from the death which Pharaoh had decreed, and the escape of the child Jesus from the destruction which Herod wished to accomplish. There is no doubt that Jehosheba carefully watched over the little Joash and taught him the law of the Lord. The children may ask why Athaliah did not find Joash. The answer is simple, for she did not worship the true God but served idols and worshiped in the temple of Baal.

The king and the temple. Refer to the fact that the house of the Lord had been built about one hundred fifty years, and during a considerable part of that time not much attention was given to it, for many of the people had gone to worshipping idols. The young king had been well trained and he desired to have the temple repaired. Impress upon the children the thought of reverence for God's house, and the idea that it should be well cared for.

The directions given to the priests. It was the duty of the priests to attend to the service of the temple. Explain the way in which the priests were to collect money to repair the temple and how negligent they were for years about carrying out the king's orders. Perhaps they had become accustomed to the broken-down condition of the Lord's house and thought it was well enough to let it go that way. This first attempt of Joash was a failure. The children may be able to tell you about the chest with the hole in the top of it for the collection of money to repair the temple. They have seen collection boxes fastened on the walls of churches and in other public places. The second plan for raising money worked well, because there was a definite object for which the people gave.

The part the people had. Show how impossible it would have been for the king to do all this alone. The king with the aid of the priests only was not able to do it. The people had a part to do. They gave their money because they had an interest in the house of the Lord. Then the workmen had an important part to perform. In large letters write the question, "Who repaired the temple?" In answer to the question write, "Joash, Jehoiaada, priests, Levites, scribe, people, carpenters, builders, masons, hewers." They all worked together and succeeded.

LESSON V

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Apr. 24.—Cast overboard.—Jonah 1:1-16. Tu.—Jonah's prayer.—Jonah 2:1-10. Wed.—Repentance of Nineveh.—Jonah 3:1-10. Th.—Why God spared Nineveh.—Jonah 4:1-11. Fr.—Men of Nineveh.—Matt. 12:38-45. Sat.—Jehovah reigneth.—Psa. 96:1-13. Su.—The great commission.—Mt. 28:1-20.

GOD'S PITY FOR THE HEATHEN—Foreign Missionary Lesson.—Jonah 3:1-4:11.

Print 3:5-4:11.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 4:10, 11)

SUPT.—5 So the people of Nin'e-veh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

School.—6 For word came unto the king of Nin'e-veh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

7 And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nin'e-veh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water:

8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.

9 Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.

1 But it displeased Jo'nah exceedingly, and he was very angry.

2 And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tar'shish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

3 Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.

4 Then said the Lord, Doest thou well to be angry?

5 So Jo'nah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.

6 And the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jo'nah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jo'nah was exceeding glad of the gourd.

7 But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered.

8 And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jo'nah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.

9 And God said to Jo'nah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.

10 Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night:

11 And should not I spare Nin'e-veh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

*AMERICAN REVISION

5 And the people of Nineveh believed God; and they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. 6 And the tidings reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. 7 And he made proclamation and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; let them not feed, nor drink water; 8 but let them be covered with sackcloth, both man and beast, and let them cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in his hands. 9 Who knoweth whether God will not turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? 10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil which he said he would do unto them; and he did it not.

1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. 2 And he prayed unto Jehovah, and said, I pray thee, O Jehovah, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I hastened to flee unto Tarshish; for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness, and repentest thee of the evil. 3 Therefore now, O Jehovah, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live. 4 And Jehovah said, Doest thou well to be angry? 5 Then Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city.

6 And Jehovah God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the gourd. 7 But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd, that it withered. 8 And it came to pass, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live. 9 And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death. 10 And Jehovah said, Thou hast had regard for the gourd, for which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: 11 and should not I have regard for Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—Go ye therefore, and teach all nations. Matt. 28:19.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—It is a duty and a privilege to carry the gospel to the heathen.

TOPIC.—God's purpose for all men.

OUTLINE.—I. The prophet's mission. II. The message effective. III. The displeased prophet instructed.

TIME.—Probably about B. C. 800.

PLACES.—The land of Israel; Nineveh in Assyria.

READ.—Jonah 1-4.

INTRODUCTION.—The mission upon which the prophet Jonah was sent and the results of his preaching afford an excellent basis for a missionary lesson. There are other lessons presented in the life and character of the prophet which are practical and helpful, but for to-day the great truth to be emphasized is God's interest in the salvation of all peoples. The story of Jonah's call to go to Nineveh, and his turning aside to go to Tarshish in order to escape the responsibility of his mission is familiar. He knew that God is a God of mercy and he believed that upon the repentance of the

Ninevites the Lord would spare the city and thus Jonah would appear as a false prophet. While some regard the book of Jonah as an allegory or a parable, the character of the writing, and the references to the prophet, both in the Old Testament and in the New, present ample evidence that the book is historical (2 Kings 14: 25; Matt. 12: 39-41; Luke 11: 29, 30). The miraculous preservation of the prophet when thrown overboard during the storm on his attempted journey to Tarshish, has staggered some people, yet without proper reason. Sea-monsters, for that is the meaning of the word translated "great fish" or "whale," are found in the Mediterranean, capable of swallowing a man or even a horse. The preservation of Jonah's life for the three days, from the time the fish swallowed him until he was cast upon the shore, was a miracle, and should by no means be discredited on that account.

COMMENTARY.—I. THE PROPHET'S MISSION (3: 1-4). God in mercy gave Jonah a second call to carry the message to Nineveh. At the first call, instead of going the six hundred miles northeast to Nineveh he started westward to Tarshish, in Spain, a distance of two thousand miles. His disastrous experience on that trip made him willing to obey the second call, although the very conditions that turned him aside the first time still prevailed. He was sent to Nineveh, the great city of Assyria, the nation that was exceedingly hostile to Israel, and which a few decades later carried his own nation into captivity. He was called, single-handed, to carry a strong message of warning to 600,000 people. He was commissioned to enter the stronghold of heathenism, but he went declaring, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." "Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey," and counting twenty miles a day's journey, the distance around the city was sixty miles. This was surrounded by a wall one hundred feet high and broad enough for three chariots to be driven abreast.

II. THE MESSAGE EFFECTIVE (3: 5-10). **5. people ... believed God**—It was a strange sight that met the eyes of the Ninevites, and a strange message that greeted their ears, as the foreign prophet in his peculiar prophet's garb and with his denunciatory words passed throughout their city, yet with the work of the Holy Spirit the message took effect and the people believed God. **proclaimed a fast**—A sign of humiliation and repentance. **put on sackcloth**—They covered themselves with a coarse cloth, made of goat's-hair, which was a symbol of sorrow and mourning. The repentance seems to have been immediate and general. **6. the king of Nineveh**—He placed himself upon a level with his lowest subject, and all humbled themselves because of their sins. **sat in ashes**—He left his costly throne and took the lowest place, expressing his deep sorrow. **7. neither man nor beast**—The case was one of momentous interest and demanded the deepest humiliation. Keil says, "It was the manifestation of the thought, that just as the animals which live with man are drawn into fellowship with his sin, so their sufferings might also help to appease the wrath of God." Men and women, old and young, high and low, and even the cattle themselves, all kept such a fast as the total abstinence from food implies.—*Clarke*. **8. cry mightily unto God**—This shows the intensity of feeling that prevailed. There was a marvelous change from their sinful practices and idolatrous worship to prayer to the true God. **turn from his evil way**—Prayer to be effectual must be accompanied by a turning away from all sin. **9. who can tell if God will turn**—The very fact that Jonah's message, "Yet forty days," showed a few days' delay in the execution of the sentence gave them hope that if they should repent and turn away

from their sins the Lord would accordingly turn away his anger from them. **10. God saw their works**—He saw as man can not see. Man sees the outward signs of repentance, but God sees the condition of the heart. They brought forth "fruits meet for repentance," turning from their evil ways. **God repented**—He changed his purpose in keeping with their changed attitude toward him. This missionary journey of the prophet Jonah was eminently successful.

III. THE DISPLEASED PROPHET INSTRUCTED (4: 1-11). **1. displeased Jonah**—It seems strange that Jonah should be grieved over the success of his ministry. He had more regard for his reputation as a prophet than for the salvation of nearly a million people. **2. therefore I fled before unto Tarshish**—He named as the reason for his shrinking from duty that he knew the great mercy of God. He had experienced that mercy upon his own repentance and was glad, but he was angry because the Lord had mercy upon a repenting city. **3. better for me to die than to live**—It may be that Jonah thought that with Nineveh's overthrow there would be better hope of Israel's prosperity, since Assyria was her strong enemy. Missionaries are tempted to discouragement because of failure to see the results of their labors, but Jonah was disheartened because he had success, although not the kind he desired. **5. what would become of the city**—He made a temporary shelter that he might wait until the forty days were ended to see if his prophesied destruction would come. **6. the Lord God prepared a gourd**—The gourd was the castor-oil plant, which had large leaves and grew quickly, making excellent shade from the hot sun. God had mercy upon Jonah in providing for his comfort and also in teaching him a much needed lesson. Though the prophet desired to die, he was glad of the gourd. **7. smote the gourd**—His pleasure in the gourd was short-lived. He had nothing to do with producing the gourd, nor with its withering and dying, yet he was grieved over its loss. **8. a vehement east wind**—"A sultry east wind."—*R. V.* Such hot winds are of frequent occurrence in that country. We note in connection with Jonah's experience that God "prepared a great fish" (Jonah 1: 17), "God prepared a gourd," "God prepared a worm," and "God prepared a vehement east wind," all for the disciplining of the prophet.

9. doest thou well to be angry—This was a reproof administered with tenderness. Jonah, even with the gift of prophecy entrusted to him, had very pronounced weaknesses. **10. had pity on the gourd**—If Jonah so pities a plant which cost him no toil to rear, and which is so short-lived and valueless, much more must Jehovah pity those hundreds of thousands of immortal men and women in great Nineveh whom he has made with such a display of creative power, especially when many of them repent.—*J., F. & B.* **11. should not I spare Nineveh**—His mercy would not permit him, upon the repentance of the men and women, to destroy the children of tender age, and the cattle, for he has a regard for the brute creation.

QUESTIONS.—Upon what mission was Jonah sent? What course did he take upon the first call? Where was Nineveh and how far from the land of Israel? How large a city was Nineveh in extent and population? What was the moral condition of Nineveh? What message did Jonah deliver? What effect did his preaching have upon the people? What did God do with the city? Why? Why was Jonah displeased? What lesson did God teach Jonah by means of the gourd? Tell in what sense Jonah might be considered a foreign missionary.

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. The place in history of this prophecy. Probably in the time of Jeroboam II of Israel. 2. The book is historical rather than allegorical. 3. The lesson is missionary in its character.

II. THEME.—God's interest in the salvation of all peoples.

III. THE MISSION FIELD.—1. Nineveh. (1) Location. The capital of Assyria. (2) Its size. Modern excavations have uncovered the city of the size indicated in the lesson. (3) The walls enclosed the buildings and much land. (4) The population. Estimated at 600,000 from the fact that there were 120,000 very young children. 2. A heathen city. 3. A proud and wicked people, cruel and oppressive. 4. Enemies to Israel, hence dangerous for a prophet of Israel. 5. A needy field. 6. Modern mission fields.

IV. THE MISSIONARY AND HIS CALL.—1. Jonah's ancestry and birthplace. The son of Amittai, of Gath-hepher in Zebulun. 2. His first call. (1) He was a prophet in Israel (2 Kings 14: 25). (2) His attempt to evade duty. (3) His rescue and repentance. (4) Jonah's lack of faith. 3. The second call. (1) God's mercy in granting him another opportunity. (2) Jonah's response. 4. God calls men and women to-day to go to foreign lands with the gospel message. He calls others to stay at home and support the workers on the field. 5. The great mission of the Christian church is to spread the gospel message. 6. Jonah not a perfect missionary. His weakness.

V. THE MESSAGE.—1. It was suited to the field where it was to be delivered. 2. It was short. We may suppose that the prophet enlarged upon it either publicly or in private conversation. 3. One missionary to 600,000 heathen. 4. The message that is borne to the heathen world to-day, the gospel of the Son of God. It embraces instruction and invitation as well as warning.

VI. THE HARVEST.—1. The missionary secured a hearing at once. 2. The people humbled themselves and repented. 3. The attitude assumed by the king. 4. The proclamation issued by the king. 5. The picture of an entire city including, men, women and children of every station in life turning away from sin to the true God. 6. The hand of God was stayed. 7. The promises to those who scatter the precious seed. 8. The effect of the repentance upon Jonah. (1) His complaint. (2) The parable of the gourd. 9. Prayer for missions.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—God's purpose for all men.

- I. Must be proclaimed by men.
- II. Finds fulfillment with the penitent.
- III. Seeks all nations for his people.

I. Must be proclaimed by men. "Preach . . . that I bid thee." The book of Jonah is a great book with a great message and clear teaching on the nature, character and purpose of God. He is revealed as the God of all nations, and herein makes a direct and powerful protest against mere priestism and ceremonialism, and instructs all men to open their hearts to their brethren of all nations. The exclusive spirit among the Jews which regarded all nations as made to subserve the welfare of Israel was always hateful to God. This narrative strikingly illustrates God's love and we may say his eagerness to forgive sinners. He makes man his instrument in blessing man. This plan serves to

deepen and stimulate man's interest in all the human family. God's thoughts (3: 2) spoken by men are a converting force. The preacher's true function is to declare what God commands him. The highest and noblest success of preaching is in its constructive and saving effects, not in its destructive results. Jonah was a "sign" (Matt. 12: 38-41) to the people of Nineveh of Jehovah's power, justice and mercy.

II. Finds fulfillment with the penitent. So skilful is the Lord that with the weakest instrument he can produce the mightiest workmanship. He gave unusual power to the message of his servant so that the inhabitants of that great city were aroused to deep concern and bowed themselves in penitence and prayer. It is God's immutable purpose to pardon penitent sinners. His purposes are of grace even when they seem to be nothing but proclamations of wrath to the uttermost. He did not change his purpose, only his method of working out his purpose to bring the sinner to salvation by bringing him to repentance. The promises are recorded that they may be fulfilled, while the threatenings are written to prevent their fulfillment. It is as much a principle of God's gracious government to suspend the execution of a threatened punishment on man's sincere repentance, as it is to execute it in the case of obstinate and continued sin. It is to the penitent that promises of deliverance are made. The people of Nineveh derived more from the preaching of Jonah than the mere knowledge that they were guilty before God. He spoke God's truth. It was alarming. It sounded just one note and that was of warning, yet there was mercy as well as justice in the alarm. It should be the preacher's consolation that the divine threats are always merciful. There is room in the all-wise decrees for answers to faithful prayers. Nineveh was convulsed by a moral revolution. Sin had been universal and mourning became universal. The people were led to alter their conduct, and change their whole manner of life. They did not stop at humiliation. All classes joined in the acts of penitence. The reformation began with the intellect, proceeded to the heart and continued until it extended to the outer life. From this narrative we gather the happy results which may be expected to follow such a public recognition of the Ruler of the universe. The history of their repentance is therefore the revelation of God's purpose of grace in the salvation of men.

III. Seeks all nations for his people. This lesson portrays to us God's great mercy and man's abject selfishness. We see what material God has to transform into skilful workmen who will rightly divide "the word of truth." Whosoever exalteth himself, though it be in the service of a divine commission, shall be humbled. Jonah wanted to be a minister of wrath to sinners. National antipathy and religious exclusiveness will account for Jonah's conduct toward the Gentile world.

T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

MISSIONARY LESSON		
THE PEOPLE OF NINEVEH WERE IN GREAT DARKNESS. MILLIONS ARE STILL IN THE SAME CONDITION. WHO WILL HELP THEM?	GO YE THEREFORE AND TEACH ALL NATIONS	CHRIST'S COMMAND IS IMPERATIVE— "GO!" EVERY FAITHFUL WORKER HELPS TO HASTEN THE DAY OF CHRIST'S VICTORY.

Practical Applications

"The preaching that I bid thee" (3:2). The all-wise Father sees the world with all its needs. He sees our little selves with our hopes, aspirations, capabilities and limitations. He sees our home town, our county, state and nation, but he sees other states and nations also. He sees the regions across the seas and yearns for the salvation of its peoples. He sends his voice into the soul of one of his followers, and that voice echoes the word, "Go." In foreign missionary work the Master sees the needy field, calls upon his servant to go to it, and gives the message to deliver. John the Baptist had a message (Matt. 3:2), Jesus had a message (Matt. 4:17), and Paul had a message (2 Cor. 4:5). The message that God bade Jonah preach was brief and pointed, and reached the ears and hearts of the people. It is the message that God gives now that reaches hearts. It is a fruitless effort to try to fix up a message of our own, leaving God out of the question. Such efforts bear the impress of man and not of the Holy Spirit.

"Cry mightily unto God" (3:8). The effect of the message was to produce conviction, and such conviction as found its expression in deep humiliation. That heathen king took the stand that every right-thinking sinner should take. He humbled himself and cried unto God. The Ninevites believed the message, and, believing it, they cried unto God. There is little hope of the conversion of that soul who will not call upon the Lord. The king's exhortation denotes intense earnestness. Feeble, spasmodic efforts do not avail. The cry continued until the answer came. This heathen people set an example for a more enlightened age. Two hundred years after Jonah the last king of Assyria proclaimed a fast of a hundred days, because an enemy was approaching, and the people prayed to their sun-god to deliver them, but they received no answer. The nation was overthrown.

"God saw their works" (3:10). Men expect to see the fruits of repentance in those who profess to turn to the Lord. They expect to see the drunkard abandon his cups, the dishonest man his crookedness, and not that only, but to restore dishonest gain; they expect the swearer to cease his profanity, the liar, his lying; and the lazy man, his laziness. God sees more deeply than man can see, for he sees the motives which actuate, discerning whether they are pure or not. Outward piety may satisfy men, but not God unless the outward works correspond with the state of the heart.

"God prepared a gourd" (4:6). For the refreshment and comfort of his children the Lord has regard. The weary and disheartened prophet needed encouragement and instruction. The gourd was both to Jonah. Sometimes we, like Jonah, can not see beyond our own interests to take in the sight of a world made better by our apparent loss. We are inclined to prize too highly our ease or reputation. God lets us rest and enjoy the pleasant shade for a time that he may teach us a lesson.

"God prepared a worm" (4:7). For Jonah's good God "prepared a great fish" (Jonah 1:17), "God prepared a gourd" (4:6), "God prepared a worm." The worm was to destroy the gourd that Jonah's mind might be opened to receive the lesson that, as he had enjoyed the gourd and desired its preservation, so God loved Nineveh and desired its preservation. In Christian experience there is the "gourd" of encouragement and refreshing, and there is the "worm" of sorrow and disappointment to chasten and refine us. We may well thank God not only for the gourd but also for the worm.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—We should feel an interest in the conversion of the world.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

JONAH THE MISSIONARY TO NINEVEH

THE { Call
Message
Results

Jonah the missionary prophet. Ask the class what a missionary is, and by careful questioning bring out the qualities of good missionaries and the work they do. Let as many of the class as can tell the name of some missionary and something about him. Learn who in the class are doing something to help the missionary cause. In teaching this lesson it will be well to take up the story of Jonah's call, his work and the results, not spending so much time upon his trip toward Tarshish as to leave out the missionary features of the lesson. Have a map at hand, or draw one, to show where Joppa, Tarshish and Nineveh are located. We read in the Bible of no other prophet who was sent to a Gentile nation.

Jonah's call. Tell the children to think of one thing about this call and be ready to tell it to you as you ask them one by one. On the board write a word or two of each answer to keep it in mind. When all have answered, tell the story in proper order, using the answers given by the children as far as possible. Point out Jonah's sin of unbelief and disobedience and show how likely people who shrink from duty are to get into trouble. Can the children tell what lesson Jonah learned by trying to go to Tarshish? Did he make anything by the attempt? He paid his fare to Tarshish but never reached his destination. Explain the kind of field to which Jonah was called. Make it clear to their minds that God calls men and women now to go as missionaries. Tell of the mission fields of Africa, India or China, and what the condition of the children is there.

Jonah's message. Repeat it to the class and have them repeat it after you until they can say it alone, then explain to them why it was that the city was threatened with destruction. Give a short description of the city, telling about its size, the walls and the number of people living in it. Tell how Jonah preached. It was different from what we know of here. He had no church, not even a tabernacle. He went from place to place in the city, and everywhere he went he said—Have the children repeat the sermon. We can not tell how long it took him to give his message to 600,000 people, but we are sure he did his work well. Explain what the message is that our missionaries carry to the heathen across the seas.

The results. Describe the scene of a great city in mourning over their sins. Tell the different things the people did in order to escape destruction. Write, "The people of Nineveh," and in a brace after it write, "believed," "fasted," "wore sackcloth," "turned away from evil," "cried mightily unto God." Explain that the sackcloth was coarse, rough cloth, made from goat's hair, brown in color, and was worn to express great grief,

LESSON VI

HOME READINGS.—Mon., May 1.—Name spread abroad.—2 Chron. 26: 1-15. Tu.—Humbled.—2 Chron. 26: 16-23. Wed.—Nebuchadnezzar humbled.—Dan. 4: 1-37. Th.—Belshazzar humbled.—Dan. 5: 1-31. Fr.—Sennacherib humbled.—2 Chron. 32: 1-23. Sat.—Herod humbled.—Acts 12: 1-23. Su.—God resisteth the proud.—1 Pet. 5: 1-11.

UZZIAH, KING OF JUDAH, HUMBLLED.—2 Chron. 26: 1-23. Print 2 Chron. 26: 8-21.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 19, 20)

SUPT.—8 And the Am'mon-ites gave gifts to Uz-zí'ah: and his name spread abroad even to the entering in of E'gypt; for he strengthened himself exceedingly.

School.—9 Moreover Uz-zí'ah built towers in Je-ru'sa-lem at the corner gate, and at the valley gate, and at the turning of the wall, and fortified them.

10 Also he built towers in the desert, and digged many wells: for he had much cattle, both in the low country, and in the plains: husbandmen also, and vine dressers in the mountains, and in Car'mel: for he loved husbandry.

11 Moreover Uz-zí'ah had an host of fighting men, that went out to war by bands, according to the number of their account by the hand of Je-i'el the scribe and Ma-na-sel'ah the ruler, under the hand of Hana-ni'ah, one of the king's captains.

12 The whole number of the chief of the fathers of the mighty men of valour were two thousand and six hundred.

13 And under their hand was an army, three hundred thousand and seven thousand and five hundred, that made war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy.

14 And Uz-zí'ah prepared for them throughout all the host shields, and spears, and helmets, and habergeons, and bows, and slings to cast stones.

15 And he made in Je-ru'sa-lem engines, invented by cunning men, to be on the towers and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal. And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong.

16 But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense.

17 And Az-a-ri'ah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the Lord, that were valiant men:

18 And they withstood Uz-zí'ah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uz-zí'ah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the priests the sons of Aa'ron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the Lord God.

19 Then Uz-zí'ah was wroth, and had a censor in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the Lord, from beside the incense altar.

20 And Az-a-ri'ah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the Lord had smitten him.

21 And Uz-zí'ah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the Lord: and Jo'tham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land.

*AMERICAN REVISION

8 And the Ammonites gave tribute to Uz-zí'ah; and his name spread abroad even to the entrance of Egypt; for he waxed exceedingly strong. 9 Moreover Uz-zí'ah built towers in Jerusalem at the corner gate, and at the valley gate, and at the turning of the wall, and fortified them. 10 And he built towers in the wilderness, and hewed out many cisterns, for he had much cattle; in the lowland also, and in the plain: and he had husbandmen and vine-dressers in the mountain- and in the fruitful fields; for he loved husbandry. 11 Moreover Uz-zí'ah had an army of fighting men, that went out to war by bands, according to the number of their reckoning made by Jeliel the scribe and Maaseiah the officer, under the hand of Hananish, one of the king's captains. 12 The whole number of the heads of fathers' houses, even the mighty men of valor, was two thousand and six hundred. 13 And under their hand was an army, three hundred thousand and seven thousand and five hundred, that made war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy. 14 And Uz-zí'ah prepared for them, even for all the host, shields, and spears, and helmets, and coats of mail, and bows, and stones for slinging. 15 And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by skillful men, to be on the towers and upon the battlements, wherewith to shoot arrows and great stones. And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong.

16 But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up, so that he did corruptly, and he trespassed against Jehovah his God; for he went into the temple of Jehovah to burn incense upon the altar of incense. 17 And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of Jehovah, that were valiant men; 18 and they withstood Uz-zí'ah the king, and said unto him, It pertaineth not unto thee, Uz-zí'ah, to burn incense unto Jehovah, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honor from Jehovah God. 19 Then Uz-zí'ah was wroth; and he had a censor in his hand to burn incense; and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy brake forth in his forehead before the priests in the house of Jehovah, beside the altar of incense. 20 And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out quickly from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because Jehovah had smitten him. 21 And Uz-zí'ah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a separate house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of Jehovah; and Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. Prov. 16: 18.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—It is dangerous to let the heart become lifted up against God.

TOPIC.—True piety and self-exaltation.

OUTLINE.—I. Uz-zí'ah made king. II. Uz-zí'ah's prosperity. III. Uz-zí'ah's pride. IV. Uz-zí'ah's humiliation.

TIME.—Uzziah began to reign in B. C. 810.

PLACE.—Jerusalem, the capital of Judah.

PARALLEL ACCOUNT.—2 Kings 14: 21, 22; 15: 1-7.

READ.—2 Chron. 26-28.

INTRODUCTION.—The reign of Joash, though prosperous in its early part, terminated disastrously. He forsook the worship of God after the death of Jehoiada and was led into idolatry. He was reproved by Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, and Joash ordered him to be slain. The Lord permitted the Syrians to defeat Judah, and Joash was slain by his own servants, who conspired against him because he had caused the death of Zechariah. Joash was succeeded by his son Amaziah, who was neither wholly good nor wholly bad. He was an active man and made war upon the Edomites and gained the victory over them. He became lifted up on account of his success and made war upon Israel. Ju-

dah was defeated at the battle of Beth-shemesh. The walls of Jerusalem were thrown down, much treasure was taken to Amaria and Amaziah himself was made a prisoner. He fell into idolatry, and the Jewish priests conspired against him on that account, putting him to death at Lachish whither he had fled for safety.

COMMENTARY.—I. UZZIAH MADE KING (vs. 1-3). Uzziah, also called Azariah (2 Kings 14: 21), became king of Judah at the age of sixteen years. He continued to reign during a period of fifty-two years. His reign was longer than that of any other king of Judah except Manasseh, who reigned fifty-five years, and longer than any king of Israel. The account of his long reign is comparatively brief. He came into power after the disasters that befell the kingdom during his father's time, and his work was largely one of reconstruction. The mention of his building, or repairing, Eloth (commonly called Elath) indicates the importance of that place, and also presents the young king as a zealous worker.

II. UZZIAH'S PROSPERITY (vs. 4-15). **4-7.** The key to Uzziah's prosperity is indicated in verses 4 and 5. "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord," and "he sought God." "As long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper." He was a warrior and waged an aggressive warfare. He invaded the territory of the Philistines, the old enemy of Israel, and defeated them in their own strongholds. He also conquered the Arabians, who had injured Judah in the reign of Jehoram, and the Mehunims in the region of Mount Seir. **8.** The Ammonites gave gifts—They were in subjection to Judah and paid tribute to Uzziah. **name spread**—His successful military operations became known beyond the regions where he waged war. **strengthened himself exceedingly**—"Waxed exceeding strong."—**R. V.** In following God he became strong to defend God's chosen people. **9. built towers**—He repaired and fortified the walls of Jerusalem where they had been broken down. **corner gate**—At the northwest corner of the city. **valley gate**—The gate opening westward toward the valley of Hinnom. **at the turning of the wall**—A curve in the wall on the east. **10. towers in the desert**—For the threefold purpose of defense, of observation and of shelter to his cattle.—**J., F. & B. wells**—Rather cisterns to catch and retain the water which fell during the rainy season. **Carmel**—The word means "fruitful fields," and is used in that sense rather than as denoting the Carmel in the kingdom of Israel. **loved husbandry**—The king gave particular encouragement to agriculture.

11. went out to war by bands—The enrolment of the fighting men was in charge of Hananiah, "one of the king's captains," who arranged the hosts so that the different companies should go out to war in rotation, each division being engaged in warfare a portion of the year and a portion of the year at home. **12. chief of the fathers**—"Heads of fathers' houses."—**R. V.** The heads of families made up "the mighty men of valour," each father's house forming a distinct band. **13. an army**—In proportion to the population of Judah, the army of 307,500 was remarkable in point of numbers. **14. habergeons**—"Coats of mail."—**R. V.** These were coverings for the body to protect it from the missiles and other weapons of the enemy. **15. engines**—These were "enormous bows or springs, set in a wooden frame-work, and so contrived as to hurl with the greatest violence both darts and stones."—**Whedon.** This is the first notice that occurs in history of the use of machines for throwing projectiles. The invention is apparently ascribed to the reign of Uzziah.—**J., F. & B.**

III. UZZIAH'S PRIDE (vs. 16-19). **16. when he was strong**—His strength had come while he was walking in humility and faith before the Lord. **his heart was lifted up**—He became proud and independent, losing sight of his great mission. Comparatively few men can enjoy prosperity without their hearts being lifted up in pride. **transgressed**—It was the duty of the priests alone "to burn incense upon the altar of incense," but Uzziah in his pride desired "to be chief in all things, both in church and state." Uzziah must have deliberately determined to invade the priest's office, thus repeating the sin of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.—**Cook.** **the altar of incense**—Directions were given Moses as to its construction and position (Exod. 30: 1-6), and upon it the priest was to burn incense twice daily (Exod. 30: 7, 8). **17. Azariah the priest**—He was doubtless the high priest at the time, and as such it was his duty to oppose Uzziah's sacrilegious act. He and the eighty brave priests were determined that the sacred precincts of the temple should not be polluted even by a king. **18. withstood**—They could do no less and discharge their duty. **appertaineth not unto thee**—It was not a duty of his, and more than that, he was an intruder in attempting to perform an office which belonged exclusively to the priests. **go out of the sanctuary**—They used their authority even over a king. **neither...for thine honour**—Uzziah designed to appropriate a new honor to himself, but it was a disgrace to him to assume to himself priestly functions. **19. was wroth**—He was angry because any one, even a high priest, should dispute his right to do anything he wished. **a censer in his hand**—He was persistent in his purpose to burn the incense. He would show the priests that he could assume to himself whatever rights he might choose.

IV. UZZIAH'S HUMILIATION (vs. 20-23). **20. the chief priest...looked upon him**—It was the duty of the priests to pronounce upon the disease of leprosy (Lev. 13, 14). **leprous**—Leprosy was the most dreaded disease of the East. It was contagious, loathsome, incurable, fatal. **forehead**—It appeared in the most conspicuous place, so that all present could see it as a judgment from God. It came suddenly, "while he was wroth with the priests." **thrust him out**—Nothing unclean could be allowed in the temple, hence it was the duty of the priests to cast out the leprous king. **himself hasted**—Death was the penalty for invading the sacred office, and the king feared for his life. He defied men and even God, but he found that there was a mightier than he. **21. dwelt in a several house**—In a house of separation, or in an infirmary. The Jewish law forbade the leper to mingle in society. **Jotham**—Uzziah was disqualified for the position in which he had grown great. His pride had caused his complete downfall. His son became virtually the ruler of the kingdom. **22, 23.** Isaiah mentions Uzziah (Isa. 1: 1), but the book referred to is lost. King Uzziah was a leper until his death and because of his disease his body was not interred in the burial-place of the kings of Judah but in a field close by.

QUESTIONS.—Who reigned in Judah after Joash? Who came next? How old was Uzziah when he began to reign? What great things did he accomplish? What is said of his moral character in the early part of his reign? What was the secret of his success? What change took place later? In what act did he commit sin? Who opposed him in that act? What calamity befell Uzziah? How long did his affliction last? Why could he no longer act as king? Who succeeded him?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. Review the important truths connected with repairing the temple in the reign of Joash. 2. The sad end of Joash. 3. Amaziah's success and failure. 4. Joash, Amaziah and Uzziah began well but failed in the end. A lesson upon continuing in well-doing.

II. THEME.—The disastrous results of pride.

III. UZZIAH PROSPEROUS.—1. He became king while young. More mature than boys of sixteen with us. 2. The condition in which the kingdom was left him by his father. See 2 Chron. 25: 22-24. 3. Uzziah's activity in restoring the Jewish kingdom. 4. Victories over various nations. (1) Philistines. (2) Arabians. (3) Mehunims. (4) Ammonites. 5. His building operations. (1) Elath. (2) Fortifying Jerusalem. (3) Towers in the desert. 6. His interest in the products of the soil. Agriculture the basis of wealth. 7. His ability as an organizer of the military power. 8. The implements and equipments of war. 9. The secret of his prosperity is given in verses 4 and 5. 10. Thus far Uzziah appears a model king.

IV. UZZIAH LIFTED UP IN PRIDE.—1. The king mistook the source of his strength. "He was marvellously helped," but he appeared to think he had helped himself. 2. He was powerful as a statesman and as a warrior. He thought there was no sphere closed to him. 3. He had an ambition to be supreme in religious affairs. 4. His prosperity had turned both his head and his heart. 5. He had ceased to seek the Lord. 6. The place and purpose of the altar of incense. 7. The duty of the priest to burn the incense. 8. Refer to Korah, Dathan and Abiram. 9. The interference of Zechariah and the other priests was a sacred duty. 10. Pride and ambition, opposed, produce anger.

V. UZZIAH'S DOWNFALL.—1. His downfall was self-invited. 2. It was sudden. At the instant when he imagined his power supreme, the terrible punishment was inflicted. How weak is man in the presence of the Almighty! 3. The leprosy. Visible, loathsome, fatal. 4. Uzziah an outcast. 5. Note the cases of Miriam and Gehazi. 6. The lesson that was taught Nebuchadnezzar. 7. Uzziah was strong while he occupied his proper sphere, but weak when he attempted to change God's plan. 8. He was shut out from kingly functions, barred from human society and separated in his burial, because he was a leper.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—True piety and self-exaltation.

I. Determined Uzziah's rise and fall.


II. Marked Uzziah's prosperity and punishment.

I. Determined Uzziah's rise and fall. Two strong contrasts enter into the history of King Uzziah. He was either greatly blessed or seriously chastened. He was first a great strength to his nation and then a great disgrace. He first obtained strength from the Lord and then presumed upon his own authority. He was first "marvellously helped" (v. 15), and then lifted up to his own destruction (v. 16). His history is a strong proof that true piety and self-exaltation can not exist together in the human heart. It is also a clear warning against the danger of relying upon past help to the neglect of seeking daily help from God. It shows the possibility of becoming a prey to the enemy even in advanced life. It teaches that times of greatest spiritual development are times also of danger lest self-reliance take the place of constant reliance upon God. There is no question that

Uzziah was truly pious, and there is no reason why the period of young manhood should not be given to the cultivation of true piety. It is the marvelous help of God that makes a man strong, and none can be strong religiously apart from such help. The life of a Christian is the life of a conqueror. Everything shows that the kingdom in Uzziah's time had reached a condition of prosperity such as it had not known since the days of Solomon. Around the king unusual hopes had gathered. On every hand he extended the realm of Judah, and made the foes of God's people lick the dust. With his fall a thousand hopes were shattered and a nation's faith fell headlong to the ground. Uzziah prospered in war, in building and in agriculture. What is there that God can not do for a man who takes him into his counsels! The extent of Uzziah's prosperity was counted marvelous. He came into full strength because God helped him. Trust in God means granted wisdom and success, while pride always means folly and failure. Uzziah's experience is a type of the process that takes place in many hearts. Any particle of pride which leads us to attribute to ourselves the success of the past is a sin in the sight of God. It requires special grace to keep a man right when he has had a career of unbroken prosperity.

II. Marked Uzziah's prosperity and punishment. "But when he was strong." At the zenith of his power and prosperity Uzziah missed the mark. He invaded the dignity of the priesthood, which he had no right to do, and for that sin he was deprived of the royal dignity to which he had a right. He coveted forbidden honors and forfeited allotted ones. Uzziah was not willing that any in his realm should enjoy prerogatives denied to him. He exhibited haughtiness, daring, arrogance and false independence in spiritual things. He transgressed his authority and had to be rebuked though a king. Rightly to apprehend Uzziah's sin we must remember through what barriers he had to break before he could resolve to do that wrong. He had to disregard the direct command of Jehovah. He had to despise the history of his people and to reject the solemn lessons that he had learned from his childhood. Though a king he became the slave of pride and passion, unregulated ambition, and impious recklessness. The immediate and necessary consequence of pride is presumption. Uzziah presumed to usurp the office of the priest. His punishment remained a lasting judgment, intended to possess the people with a greater veneration for the temple worship and for the priesthood and other sacred matters of which they were apt to think too lightly. The severest judgments of God have mercy connected with them both to the persons themselves and to others who by them learn caution and due reverence. Conscious that God had smitten him Uzziah hurried from the temple self-condemned. God's mark of disapprobation was on his brow where all could see it. The smitten forehead laid the offender under arrest and exposed him. T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

<p>UZZIAH'S ACT WAS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. UNLAWFUL. 2. PROMPTED BY PRIDE. 3. IN DEFIANCE OF WARNING. 4. SIGNALLY PUNISHED. 	 <p>THIS SHOULD TEACH HUMILITY, RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY, RESPECT FOR SACRED THINGS, VALUE OF REPROOF.</p>
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Practical Applications

"God made him to prosper" (v. 5). Prosperity in the true sense of the word is from the Lord. Solomon prospered (1 Chron. 29: 23), Asa prospered (2 Chron. 14: 7), Hezekiah prospered (2 Chron. 31: 21) and Daniel prospered (Dan. 6: 28). Uzziah prospered because he sought the Lord (v. 5), and the practise of that rule will always insure prosperity (Psa. 34: 10). Temporal prosperity is not a fair test of one's devotion to God. There was a time when Job was prospered both spiritually and temporally. There was another time when repeated temporal disasters left him in poverty, bereavement and physical suffering, yet he was prospering spiritually, as his personal testimony clearly shows (Job 23: 10). Solomon was prosperous temporally and spiritually in his earlier years as king. Later he lost his spiritual power, being led away from the true God, but he continued to prosper temporally. Paul prospered amid all his losses, hardships, labors and persecutions, inasmuch that at the end of his career he could say, "I have fought a good fight. . . . I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4: 7). The prosperity that counts is that, the beneficent results of which endure eternally; while temporal prosperity is, at best, only fleeting, and men's eyes are so blinded by it that they can not see the prosperity that is real.

"His heart was lifted up" (v. 16). It is not unlikely that the Lord permits many of his children to struggle along without an abundance of wealth, lest they should become "lifted up," if they should acquire large possessions. It is difficult for rich people to enter the kingdom of God (Luke 18: 24). There is danger arising from an increase of riches (Psa. 62: 10). Uzziah lost sight in later life of his early pursuit, which was seeking the Lord, and came to feel that he was sufficient of himself to maintain his greatness and even to take upon himself the sacred office of priesthood. Brooks wrote in the seventeenth century, "Where one thousand are destroyed by the world's frowns, ten thousand are destroyed by the world's smiles. The world, siren-like, sings us and sinks us; it kisses us and betrays us, like Judas; it kisses us and smites us under the fifth rib, like Joab." When once Satan has a person puffed up with pride, he has an easy task to accomplish his destruction, in fact his destruction is already fairly accomplished.

"The Lord had smitten him" (v. 20). It was but a step from pride to sacrilege. The evil that entered Uzziah's heart broke down for him the distinction between the common and the sacred. In fact the king almost defied God. "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16: 18). As the dreaded disease, leprosy, fastened itself upon Uzziah and maintained its grip until it accomplished his death, so the leprosy of sin already has seized upon the proud of heart and is accomplishing its deadly work. We have reason to be thankful that through Jesus Christ this moral leprosy can be cured, and the cure when effected will leave the victim free from the dominion of Satan. It is one of the saddest sights in life to behold one who has risen high in Christian experience go down into sin through allowing pride to enter the heart. The stately oak is a magnificent sight as it towers skyward clothed with its vernal beauty, but a thing exciting our pity as it lies prostrate, borne down by a strong wind; and especially pitiable if it is found to be rotten at heart. Pride admitted produces moral decay and is followed by destruction. The time of danger is when, through overconfidence, one disregards the possibility of making a misstep.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—We are in danger of falling if we become proud.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

PROSPERITY

PRESUMPTION

PUNISHMENT

UZZIAH'S LIFE A WARNING

Review. Make sure of the permanence of the impression made upon the class by the missionary lesson of last week by securing answers to the questions, Who? Where? Why? What? A blackboard outline, embracing these questions with their answers, can not fail to impress the review upon the class. There is another review that is essential to the proper presentation of to-day's lesson. It is the one about Joash and his repairing the temple. Two lessons should be emphasized. One is reverence and care for God's house; the other is cheerful giving for the cause of God. It will be necessary to tell the story of the closing years of the life of Joash, a sad ending for a life so well begun, and also the story of Amaziah who followed Joash.

Uzziah's prosperity. If you make use of the above blackboard outline, you can readily explain the word prosperity, by saying that a newsboy is prosperous if he succeeds in selling his papers and takes good care of his money, or the pupil is prosperous who learns his lessons carefully and recites them well. Write on the board three things that Uzziah did that indicated his prosperity. He repaired city walls, he drove back enemies and he helped the people. Do not fail to show why he prospered. There are two expressions in this lesson, in verses 4 and 5, that explain it. "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord," is one; and the other is, "As long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper." It would be easy to teach the latter sentence to the children so that they can repeat it to you.

Uzziah's pride. If the king had gone on as he began he would have been one of the greatest rulers in Jewish history. It would have been well for the nation if he had continued to seek the Lord and humbly work for the welfare of the people. Show what danger there is in forgetting God. Tell the story of Nebuchadnezzar who boasted of his own power and greatness (Dan. 4: 30), and show how he was humbled. More than seven hundred years ago there was a student at Oxford, named Simon Tournay, who was unusually bright and excelled all his fellow students. He believed that he was the equal or the superior of all the greatest men of the past, so proud did he become. He later became such an idiot that he did not know his letters. In a few words explain how Uzziah attempted to perform the duties of the priests which the law forbade. He felt that he could do anything he chose regardless of God's law.

Uzziah's punishment. The king's pride became his ruin. The priests tried to show him the wrong he was doing in burning incense in the temple. Boys and girls sometimes become determined to have their own way. When the king was opposed by the priests he became angry. Pride and anger are sins that often go together.

LESSON VII

HOME READINGS.—Mon., May 8.—Isaiah's vision.—Isa. 6: 1-13. Tu.—Vision of Jehovah's house.—Isa. 2: 1-4. Wed.—Triumph over idols.—Isa. 2: 5-22. Th.—Entering into judgment.—Isa. 3: 1-15. Fr.—Headless women.—Isa. 3: 16-4: 1. Sat.—The redeemed Jerusalem.—Isa. 4: 2-6. Su.—Come, let us reason together.—Isa. 1: 1-20.

ISAIAH'S VISION AND CALL TO SERVICE—Home Missionary Lesson.—Isa. 6: 1-13.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 6-8)

SUPT.—1 In the year that king Uz-ziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

School.—2 Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

4 And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

7 And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.

9 And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.

10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes: lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

11 Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate,

12 And the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.

13 Put yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.

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*AMERICAN REVISION

1 In the year that king Uz-ziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. 2 Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. 3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. 4 And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts. 6 Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: 7 and he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin forgiven. 8 And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me. 9 And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. 10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again, and be healed. 11 Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until cities be waste without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the land be one utterly waste, 12 and Jehovah have removed men far away, and the forsaken places be many in the midst of the land. 13 And if there be yet a tenth in it, it also shall in turn be eaten up: as a terebinth, and as an oak, whose stock remaineth, when they are felled; so the holy seed is the stock thereof.

SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. Isa. 6: 8.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—Those who are freed from sin willingly respond to the divine call.

TOPIC.—Isaiah's three-fold vision.

OUTLINE.—I. Isaiah's vision. II. The sense of sin and its removal. III. The call. IV. The commission.

TIME.—About B. C. 758.

PLACE.—Jerusalem, probably at the temple.

READ.—Isa. 2-4.

INTRODUCTION.—Isaiah has been called the evangelical prophet, and his prophecy, "The gospel according to Isaiah" because of his frequent references to the Messiah. Little is known of his ancestry, indeed nothing more than is given in the first verse of his prophecy. His prophetic career extended over a period of fifty or sixty years. There is a tradition, which some think may be true, that he died as a martyr during the reign of Manasseh. Hosea, Nahum and Micah were prophets contemporary with Isaiah, and possibly also Joel, Amos and Jonah in the early part of his life. He prophesied during the reigns of Uz-ziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (Isa. 1: 1). This lesson has been designated a home missionary lesson inasmuch as the prophet was given a commission to carry the divinely appointed message to his own people. Jonah was sent with a message to a heathen nation but Isaiah labored among the Jews.

COMMENTARY.—I. ISAIAH'S VISION (vs. 1-4). 1. In the year that king Uz-ziah died—This apparently marks the date of Isaiah's introduction into the prophetic office, and he was relating his own religious experience. I saw also the Lord—The earthly king [Uzziah] has passed away, and now Isaiah sees the true King in his glory.—*Cam. Bible*. The vision occurred at the temple in Jerusalem. Isaiah saw more than the material temple and its appointments. He looked into the most holy place, the veil being withdrawn, and with his spiritual eyes he saw the Lord in his majesty, sitting upon a throne—An attitude of authority. high and lifted up—The throne is here referred to. his train filled the temple—The folds of his garments, resplendent in glory, filled the whole space. 2. above it—"Above him."—*R. V.* stood the seraphims—The seraphim (probably "fiery beings") are mentioned nowhere else in scripture as angelic beings. Their function in this vision is purely symbolical. They are the attendants of Jehovah's court or the ministers of the invisible sanctuary; they reflect the glory of God, and by their presence and actions suggest new and fuller conceptions of his ineffable majesty.—*Cam. Bible*. six wings—Denoting their swiftness. twain—The first pair of wings was used to veil their faces, for even they were unable to

look upon the glorious face of God. The second pair alone was used in flight, and the third, or lowest pair covered the entire lower part of the body including the feet, "a practise usual in the presence of Eastern monarchs, in token of reverence."

3. one cried unto another—If there were more than two they were arranged in two rows on opposite sides of the throne, and some began the ascription of honor to God and others responded. **holy, holy, holy**—Repeated for emphasis, but some think it was used three times to symbolize the Trinity. The word holy expresses the essence of the divine nature and "those positive attributes of God which constitute true divinity, and call for the religious emotions of awe, reverence and adoration." It calls out the infinite purity of God in contrast to man's moral corruption. "In God is found the final degree of exalted, limitless, inexhaustible excellence in the whole universe."—*Robinson*. **earth is full of his glory**—One translation is, "The fullness of the whole earth is his glory." There may be a prophecy of the final and complete triumph of the gospel. **4. the posts of the door moved**—"The foundations of the thresholds shook."—*R. V.* The voices of the seraphim struck the chord of the foundations of the thresholds and they were set in vibration. **filled with smoke**—Some regard this as meaning that the incense burning upon the altar filled the holy place with smoke; others that it was "the incense of praise, kindled on the altar of incense by the seraphim songs." Still others think it was the reaction of Jehovah's nature against sin, and that it answered to the prophet's consciousness of his own moral impurity.

II. THE SENSE OF SIN AND ITS REMOVAL (vs. 5-7). **5. woe is me**—At sight of this display of divine holiness the prophet is dismayed. The fire of purity, he fears, will not cleanse, but consume him, conscious as he is of impurity.—*Whedon*. **undone**—Helpless and almost despairing. **of unclean lips**—The defilement of his moral nature found expression through his lips. The angelic beings had sung the praises of Jehovah, but the prophet's impurity forbade his joining with them. **a people of unclean lips**—Not only was there impurity within, but there was defilement from contact with the people among whom he dwelt. Isaiah had a vision of the divine glory, and through it, saw his own sinfulness as well as that of others. **mine eyes have seen the King**—He felt both his impurity and the danger that he was in from having beheld the King (Judg. 6: 22, 23). **6. then flew**—Isaiah's cry of need brought a quick response. **a live coal**—Fire was the agency of purification. The fire had come from the altar where the atoning sacrifice had been offered, and hence was efficacious. "As earthly fire burns away external impurity, so the heavenly fire burns away the defilement of sin, first from the lips, but through them from the whole man."—*Dillmann*. The sin of his whole nature had seemed to him to be concentrated in his lips. **7. this bath touched thy lips**—The efficacy of the altar had been conveyed to Isaiah. His lips were touched, not simply that his iniquity might be taken away, but also that he might be empowered to bear with effectiveness the message given to him.

III. THE CALL (v. 8). **8. heard the voice of the Lord**—Isaiah had seen the glory of the Lord and had heard the voices of the seraphim, but he had not yet heard the voice of the Lord. The application of the live coal had fitted him to hear the voice of the Lord. **whom shall I send**—A great inquiry reaches the prophet's ear. It is an inquiry which Jehovah is ever making; namely, for preach-

ers and missionaries to a dying world.—*Whedon*. **who will go**—The divine will and the human will must coincide. God has in his mind those whom he desires to send, and it remains for them to be willing to go. The Lord still reserves to himself the prerogative of particularly calling men and women to preach the gospel and to work as missionaries. **for us**—The plural may be used to denote the divine majesty or it may include the hosts of heaven, Jehovah and his attendants. **here am I; send me**—The man who a few minutes before was "undone" and felt himself lost was ready to respond to the divine call. He who had trembled at the presence of Jehovah, dared to speak to him, and to undertake a mission for him.

IV. THE COMMISSION (vs. 9-13). **9. go, and tell this people**—With the call to go comes a commission. There were those to whom Isaiah had access. He was called to be a home missionary for he was sent with a message to his own people. **hear ye indeed, but understand not**—The Lord directed the prophet to declare the truth to the people even though he knew that through the hardness of their hearts they would not accept. "Light enough is given in revelation to guide those sincerely seeking to know, in order that they may do, God's will; darkness enough is left to confound the wilfully blind."—*J., F. & B.* **10. make the heart, etc.**—The truth revealed to Isaiah is that the unbelief of his countrymen amounts to an incapacity for divine things, which can only be intensified by the further disclosure of the truth of God.—*Cam. Bible*. When the heart is hardened resolutely against God's truth, the presentation of that truth has the effect to still further harden the heart. God does not make the heart fat, nor the ear heavy. The attitude of the man or woman toward the truth determines whether there shall be a perception of the truth and a reception of it. **convert**—"Turn again."—*R. V.*

11. how long—Isaiah had no disposition to shun the mission given him. He desired to know how long this condition would continue. **until the.... land be utterly desolate**—Until the kingdom of Judah should be taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar one hundred fifty years later. God's policy toward his people was to deal with them in mercy, sending prophets to them to constrain them to faith and obedience, but determined opposition to his plan could but bring dire calamity in the end. **12. removed men far away**—Into Babylon, "and the forsaken places be many in the midst of the land" (*R. V.*). **13. a tenth**—Only one in ten of the inhabitants of Judah would be allowed to remain. "The captain of the guard left of the poor of the land to be vine-dressers and husbandmen" (2 Kings 25: 12). **as a teil tree**—A terebinth, or turpentine tree. A tree not as large as an oak and producing a resin. **substance is in them, when they cast their leaves**—The Revised Version expresses the thought more clearly. When the tree is cut down there is vitality in the roots and stump sufficient to cause new shoots to spring up. **so the holy seed is the stock thereof** (*R. V.*)—The ruined Israel contains the indestructible germs of the kingdom of God.—*Cum. Bible*.

QUESTIONS.—Who was Isaiah? In the time of what kings did he live? What vision did Isaiah see? What words did he hear during the progress of the vision? What were Isaiah's words as he saw the vision? What act was performed for his relief? Why was the application made to his lips? What call did Isaiah hear? What was his response? What commission did he receive? What equipment had he for undertaking such a work?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. The place in history of Isaiah. 2. Connect this lesson with the preceding. Uzziah was king and was succeeded by Jotham. 3. The ancestry of Isaiah. 4. His rank as a prophet. 5. Characteristics of his prophecy. 6. His character as a man. 7. Bear in mind the home missionary nature of this lesson.

II. THEME.—Our work and the preparation necessary for it.

III. THE VISION.—1. When the vision was seen. 2. The scene described. (1) The place. (2) The appearance of the Lord. (3) Other divine appearances in scripture. (4) The seraphim; their appearance and office. (5) The ascriptions. (6) The smoke. 3. The purpose of the vision. (1) For Isaiah. (2) For the people of all ages. 4. The effect of the vision.

IV. ISAIAH'S NEED AND HOW IT WAS MET.—1. Isaiah's sense of guilt. 2. A view of God's holiness made him feel keenly his uncleanness. 3. His lament and its cause. 4. The influence of ungodly associates. 5. The cry of Isaiah showed that the vision was effectual. 6. In answer to the cry of need the purifying agency was applied. 7. The reason for applying the live coal to the prophet's lips. 8. The nature of fire. 9. The significance of taking the live coal from off the altar. 10. The deliverance from iniquity complete.

V. THE CALL.—1. The world is a needy field. 2. The foreign field. 3. The home field. (1) Neglected regions in the country. (2) The field for missions in our cities. (3) New portions of the west. (4) Our neighbors who are unsaved. 3. The call came within Isaiah's hearing. 4. Isaiah's attitude toward the call. 5. His changed feelings and spirit. 6. God calls and sends preachers and missionaries. 7. He calls us all to labor for him.

VI. THE COMMISSION.—1. He was to bear the message to his own people. 2. The nature of the message. 3. The character of his hearers. 4. The purpose of his ministry. 5. The cause of the hardness of the people's hearts. 6. The results of his ministry as foretold by the Lord. 7. An unpromising field. 8. How long the hardness of heart was to continue. 9. A rift in the cloud. 10. The joy of duty accomplished.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Isaiah's threefold vision.

- I. A vision of God's holiness.
- II. A vision of personal depravity.
- III. A vision of the world's need.

I. A vision of God's holiness. Visions of himself are the means which the great God has ever employed to restore men. Every man's course is shaped by the view that he forms of the supreme Ruler. A personal contact with God will ever leave its mark on the soul. The source of all inspiration for Isaiah lay in the profound conception that the heart of the Infinite and Eternal is holiness, and such a vast conception has vast unfoldings. Holiness was the attribute upon which the seraphim dwelt, the holiness of the Lord whom they adored. Their message was important because it was clearly a message for Isaiah's own heart, the message that was henceforth to be the key-note of his own teaching. The fuller and richer the conception of God, the nobler and stronger will be the religious life. It was not until the earthly king was taken away that Isaiah saw the King of kings, "high and lifted up," a limited interest replaced by a larger one, a low

standard supplanted by a loftier one, a local monarch stepping aside to reveal the universal King. Isaiah's vision taught him that the ultimate security for national greatness was not kings and crowns, but God. This was a critical time for the young Isaiah when King Uzziah died. His faith must either die or be reborn. God had put out the secondary light that Isaiah might see the eternal light. The vision of the glory of God which he saw became the means of filling him with reverence, humility and fear. He recognized the divine life as being everywhere.

II. A vision of personal depravity. When there is no vision of excellence there can be no pangs of self-reproach. A vision of God's holiness created in Isaiah a sense of his own unworthiness, and gave him a sense of his own defects and villainess. Until then the blots and blemishes of his soul seemed small, but under the light of heaven, with God's eye resting upon him, every spot of sin within him, every defiling stain seemed an insult inflicted on the holiness of God. Both personally and as a representative of the Jewish nation, Isaiah was convicted of sin. To prevent him from sinking into despair divine consolation was given. The sense of remission of sin was as real as the sense of sin itself. The sin recognized and repented of was burned away. This vision was an anticipation of the incarnation of our Lord. Isaiah was purged from his iniquity that he might proclaim the love, the sacrifice which takes away iniquity. Isaiah's attitude of worship brought to him a vision and revelation which had an immediate and transforming effect on his whole life. Special preparation is necessary for a special work of grace whether it be in the individual heart or in the church, and the blessed results of the work will be largely proportioned to the character and degree of the preparation. Isaiah's preparation resulted in his great commission as God's prophet.

III. A vision of the world's need. Isaiah mentioned his own sin first and then the sin of his people. He who has not been humbled under a sense of his own unworthiness before God has no preparation to carry God's truth to others. It was when Isaiah felt the exceeding sinfulness of sin that the burden of his people's sins weighed upon his heart. It was in that very experience that his preparation for service began. Those who go into the work of the Lord should have a vision of his glory and greatness that they may have a proper sense of the work in which they are engaged. They must become seers before they can become servants. Isaiah saw the King that he might serve the King. He put every faculty under tribute to him. He heard "the voice of the Lord" when he was possessed of an obedient nature. His answer meant all to him. "Send me." Nothing less will do and nothing more is possible. Worship without service is incomplete. As with Isaiah so must it be in all whole-hearted service, a conviction that the cause which is served will ultimately prevail. T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

ISAIAH CONVICTED. CLEANSED. COMMISSIONED. GOD'S GREAT QUESTION— "WHO WILL GO FOR US?" IS STILL RESOUNDING. WHO?	THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL CLEANSE OUR LIPS AND OUR HEARTS. PURIFY OUR AFFECTIONS, AND GIVE POWER TO ACCOMPLISH HIS WORK.
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Practical Applications

Contemplation. "I saw...the Lord" (v. 1). God does not need us, and when we see him we do not need any one but God. It was given to Isaiah to speak about God as God never was spoken of by mortal lips, until the Son came forth to reveal the Father. "Amid the dull routine of worldly business, the grind of worldly care, while men are buying and selling and getting gain, it is a wonderful thing to have the God of glory appear. A glance too often satisfies. A superficial Christian life must result from hasty glances at Jesus. So deep, so divine a work as his, so deep and many-sided and glorious a character, must and does demand more than a slight observation from purblind men, if the glory is to permeate their darkness. Every true look at Christ, on the part of a believer, must argue with the most irresistible logic the greater service of men. For what purpose was his redeeming work? It was to save men. And we must be about the same work."

Confession. "Woe is me" (v. 5). The vision of God and his holiness and glory lays us in the dust, and then we are ready to receive the coal of fire from the altar of the skies and be sent forth to do his bidding. George Whitefield tells how, after one of his most affecting revelations of his own heart and his unworthiness as a sinner before God, and then of the love of Jesus Christ by saving him freely by his grace, he went into his pulpit and preached until the tears rolled down the faces of thousands of his penitent hearers, and the power of God brought multitudes into the kingdom.

Cleansing. "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away" (v. 7). "The live coals of divine promise which God's baptized heralds extend to the people can not be gathered from the frozen regions of science or poesy, but must be taken from the altar-cross, baptized with his blood, glowing with that sacrificial flame. If the word of God we handle is not taken hot from that altar, it will never convert sinners or sanctify believers."

Consecration. "Here am I; send me" (v. 8). Has some loving evangel from God come to you with a glowing message fresh from the sacrifice on Calvary? Has God's sanctifying grace touched your inward impurity? Then your answer to God will be a fearless, "Here am I; send me." A lady stood talking to an evangelist on this subject of consecration. "I dare not give myself wholly to him," she said, "for fear he will send me to China as a missionary." Then the man of God took a live coal from off God's burning altar and answered: "If some cold, snowy morning a little half-frozen bird should peck at your window, and let you take it in and feed it, thereby putting itself entirely in your power, what would you do? Would you take it in your hand and crush it, or give it shelter, warmth, food and care?" A new light came into the woman's face. "Ah, I see," she said, and went away. Two years afterward, meeting this evangelist she recalled to him the incident, and added, her face aglow with holy joy, "And do you know I am going to China?" To be afraid of the baptism of fire, to shrink from the preparation necessary to enable one to say, "Here am I; send me," is to lose everlastingly.

Commission. "Go" (v. 9). "A little word with a tremendous meaning! It signifies activity. It means to move forward. Advance! Backed by the Holy Ghost it has the ring of conquest. It should be written over every page of our life's history. It should be the key-word of duty for every disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. The evil age in which we live, the countless souls dying without salvation demand that we give emphasis to that word." A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—We should be ready and willing to do God's bidding.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

ISAIAH'S { Vision
Salvation
Call

READY FOR DUTY

A beginning. The sad outcome of Uzziah's reign affords a valuable lesson upon the consequences of disobedience. A review of this incident with an application of the truth will make a suitable beginning for the lesson hour. Since we have to-day a home missionary lesson, it will be well to revert briefly to the foreign missionary lesson of two weeks ago. Explain the difference between the home missionary work and the foreign. Give a description of some city mission which you have visited or of which you have read. Tell of some of the remarkable conversions that have taken place, and tell of the interesting Sunday-school there conducted, made up largely of children gathered in from the homes of the poor and the degraded.

Isaiah's vision. Tell how the Lord was preparing Isaiah for his great work as a preacher of righteousness. Describe the scene which he saw. Tell the story of Moses at the burning bush in the wilderness where God talked with him and gave him his life-work. Describe the vision that Saul of Tarsus had on the way to Damascus. Isaiah was at the house of God when he saw the vision. It is worth while to go where people gather to pray.

Isaiah saved from sin. As the prophet looked upon the glory of the Lord, he felt his own uncleanness. Illustrate by a poor man, whose clothing is dirty and tattered, who meets another man who is well and warmly clad. The poor man sees that his own clothes are poor, and seem worse after looking upon the well-dressed friend. If we should see only those who are like us, we could not have the best idea of our own lack, but when we have a view of Jesus from reading his word, and from the instructions of the Holy Spirit we shall be brought to see our need. Find out what the class know about the conditions of salvation. Describe the act of one of the seraphim and explain that the making of the heart right is the work of God. The prophet's greatest sins were connected with his words.

Isaiah's call. Tell the children of the many needy places all around us. Tell of the work the Sunday-schools are doing to teach men, women and children about Jesus. They send out Sunday-school missionaries, or appoint visitors, to go to every home to tell the people about Jesus and to invite them to Sunday-school and church. In Isaiah's time there was work to be done, and when he was set free from sin he was all ready to respond to the Lord's call. Impress the truth that not all are called to be prophets like Isaiah, but many are commissioned to be missionaries in their homes, to the family, and to all who come within their reach. Tell the story of the conversion of Gipsy Smith's mother while she was dying in the gipsy camp. She remembered the words of a gospel song she had heard twenty years before. That song had clung to her and became the instrument of her salvation.

LESSON VIII

HOME READINGS.—Mon., May 15.—Song of the vineyard.—Isa. 5:1-12. Tu.—Captivity of drunkenness.—Isa. 5:13-23. Wed.—Crown of pride.—Isa. 28:1-13. Th.—I ring, and let us drink.—Amos 4:1-13. Fr.—Wine in bowls.—Amos 6:1-11. Sat.—Shall come to poverty.—Prov. 23:1-21. Su.—The woes of the drunkard.—Prov. 23:29-35.

SONG OF THE VINEYARD—Temperance Lesson.—Isa. 5:1-12.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verse 11)

*AMERICAN REVISION

SUPT.—1 Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:

School.—2 And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.

3 And now, O inhabitants of Je-ru'sa-lem, and men of Ju'dah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.

4 What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

5 And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down:

6 And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

7 For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Is'ra-el, and the men of Ju'dah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but beheld oppression; for righteousness, but beheld a cry.

8 Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!

9 In mine ears said the Lord of hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant.

10 Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the seed of an homer shall yield an ephah.

11 Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them!

12 And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink. Isa. 5:22.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—We are thoroughly warned of the consequences of sin.

TOPIC.—A nation's career.

OUTLINE.—I. The parable of the vineyard. II. Warning against covetousness. III. Warning against intemperance.

TIME.—About B. C. 758.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

READ.—Isa. 5, 28.

INTRODUCTION.—The evil conditions that prevailed in Judah during one or two centuries before the Babylonian captivity demanded a fearless defender of righteousness in religion and in the affairs of government. King Ahaz did not hesitate to bring various forms of idolatry into the land, and the departure from the worship of the God of Israel was becoming general. Isaiah was the faithful and fearless prophet that the conditions demanded. In his denunciation of sin there is great tenderness, joined with strength and severity. The chapter of which the present lesson is a part is independent of the one which precedes it, as well as of the one which follows. It portrays Judah's departure from God, contains warnings against several classes of sins, and describes the invaders who were to accomplish the overthrow of the nation. The introduction to the pre-

ceding lesson gives a few facts regarding the prophet Isaiah and his work.

COMMENTARY.—I. THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD (vs. 1-7) 1. Let me sing for my wellbeloved (R. V.)—This parable, which would be readily comprehended by the Oriental mind, was employed to make clear to the people of Judah their true condition, and to lead them to acknowledge their sin and to condemn themselves. my beloved—Jehovah. his vineyard—The vineyard represented the Jewish nation. The prophet veiled his true purpose under this figure and led his hearers along until they realized the drift of the song and found themselves self-condemned. a very fruitful hill—The literal translation is "a horn, a son of oil." A hill or a mountain is often spoken of in the East as a horn. The vineyard was represented as being most favorably located, so God's people were given every possible advantage and they were in a position to be pleasing to Jehovah. 2. fenced it—"Dugged it."—R. V. gathered out the stones—A necessary work in preparing for a vineyard. The expression symbolizes the casting out of the idolatrous tribes that encumbered the land.—Whedon. choicest vine—As the vine-dresser would secure choice vines to plant in his vineyard,

so the Lord chose as his people the descendants of Abraham to be his peculiar treasure (Exod. 19: 5). **built a tower**—This was for purposes of defense and protection. Watchmen were employed to keep out intruders as the grapes were ripening, and to protect the vineyard from the ravages of beasts. **winepress**—For expressing the juice of the fruit. In connection with it was a cistern, often hewn out of the underlying rock, to receive the expressed liquid. **wild grapes**—No labor had been spared in the preparation of the vineyard. Care had been taken that the location, the soil, the vines, and the equipment should be the best, and there were most reasonable expectations that the crop would be good fruit. Instead of that, however, the fruit was poison, offensive, worthless. "Gesenius and others think the plant meant is the monk's-hood, or nightshade, which produces berries like the grapes in appearance, but poisonous."—*Peloubet*.

3. judge... betwixt me and my vineyard—Thus far no explanation of the parable had been offered. The Lord himself is here represented as speaking to his people, and calling upon them to decide upon what should be done. The case involved in the parable was fairly before them and the answer was easy. **4. what could have been done more**—In their inability to suggest anything more to do, they condemned themselves. **5. now go to**—An expression introducing an important statement. **I will tell you**—There had been no response to the question asked, and the questioner proceeded to state his determination. **take away the hedge**—Since the vineyard is worthless, in that the fruit is of no use, it might as well be turned over to be destroyed. Beasts of the field might find something there to help sustain life. The vineyard was protected with a hedge of thorns and a wall of stones but this protection was to be removed. God was about to permit hostile nations to harass and destroy the people of Judah. **6. will lay it waste**—The destruction was to be complete and permanent. **no rain**—The condition of Judah here foretold was in strange contrast to the condition of prosperity the nation had formerly enjoyed. They had been given their opportunity during many centuries, and mercy must soon give way to justice. The instructions that were being received through the prophets would later be withheld and the nation would be left to her destruction. **7. the vineyard... is the house of Israel**—The parable has here its full explanation. Everything possible had been done for Israel that the nation might accomplish her divinely appointed mission but repeated failures called for severe punishment. **judgment**—Justice. **a cry**—The cry of the oppressed.

II. WARNING AGAINST COVETOUSNESS (vs. 8-10). **8. woe**—The indictment [in vs. 8-23] contains six counts, each introduced by the word "woe," and is addressed exclusively to the upper classes, although the punishment of their sin falls upon the nation as a whole. The prophet sets before us a vivid picture of a debased aristocracy, in whom public virtue has been eaten out by avarice and sensuality; and he traces with remarkable insight the effect of these sins in the religious insensibility and perversion of the moral sentiments which characterized the nobles of Judah at this time.—*Cam. Bible*. **lay field to field**—The tendency was even then manifest for a few to acquire vast property, while many would become destitute. The sin of covetousness injures both those who are guilty of the sin, and those who are oppressed and deprived of what is rightfully their due. Greed has never learned to say, "Enough." **alone in the midst of the earth**—The poor are crowded out,

while the rich control vast possessions. **9. shall be desolate**—The "woe" on this landed aristocracy was decay and desolation.—*Whedon*. These words of God had sounded in the prophet's ears. **10. ten acres**—Literally, "ten yoke," that is, as much land as a yoke of oxen could plow in a day, or about three-fourths of an acre. **one bath**—About eight gallons. According to Kay, ten acres should produce five hundred baths instead of one. **an homer shall yield an ephah**—Ten bushels of seed shall yield one bushel of grain.

III. WARNING AGAINST INTemperance (vs. 11, 12). **11. woe**—Sorrow and calamity. **rise up early**—It was considered a disgrace among the Jews to begin drinking in the morning (Eccl. 10: 16; Acts 2: 15). The habit is likely to become so strong that it will override all sense of propriety. There is nothing so reasonable or sacred as to be secure from the audacity of the appetite for drink. **follow**—Strong drink is a deceiver. It leads its victims and they follow. It promises satisfaction, but can not give it. It promises pleasure, but fulfills its promise only in part. It promises manliness, but gives beastliness. It promises friends, but it is a destroyer of friendship. Men are, however, unwise enough to "follow it." **strong drink**—"Strong," because of the alcohol it contains, and alcohol is a poison. The word translated "strong drink" is a general name for intoxicating liquors obtained from dates, honey, grapes and grains. We might call it "strong," because it triumphs over intellect, overcomes moral principles, and overrides natural affection. It is "strong," because it arouses every base passion, anger, hatred and lust. It is "strong," because it nerves the victim to robbery, murder and countless other crimes. **continue until night**—The sin of drunkenness as it existed in Judah is strikingly portrayed. The people had reached the stage where they were idle and besotted. The woe is pronounced upon every person, and upon every community and nation that follows strong drink. **12. the harp**—Music, which is elevating in its nature, is degraded to furnish entertainment during drunken revels. It is used to-day to entice sober men and boys, and even women and girls into drinking-places. **viol**—A stringed instrument played with the fingers. **tabret**—Hebrew, "toph," from the use of which in drowning the cries of children sacrificed to Moloch. "Tophet" received its name.—*J., F. & B.* It was a kind of drum or tambourine. **pipe**—Flute. **regard not the work of the Lord**—They will not look around and see what God is doing to save them, nor the punishment he sends upon those who continue in their course. Warnings are on every hand, but they will not notice them. Strong drink is an opiate to the conscience, and blinds the eyes to the law of the Lord.—*Peloubet*. **neither consider the operation of his hands**—A repetition of the thought contained in the preceding clause. The people had already received many warnings and had been told of the calamities which would come upon them if they persisted in their evil course, yet they gave little heed.

QUESTIONS.—Who wrote the words of to-day's lesson? What is the subject of the parable? What preparation was made that the vineyard might bear an abundance of good fruit? Why did it not produce a good fruitage? What should be done with the unfruitful vineyard? What was the parable designed to teach? What particular woes were pronounced upon Judah? What was to be the consequence of joining house to house and laying field to field? What evils flow from intemperance? What means may be employed to stop drunkenness?

A Teaching Plan

I. **INTRODUCTORY.**—1. The opportunity afforded by the temperance lesson. 2. The present lesson connected with the preceding one. The same writer. 3. The age of the nation. 4. Improvement or degeneration in the national life. 5. The tendency when wealth increases. 6. An outline of subjects considered in the fifth chapter of Isaiah.

II. **THEME.**—The sins of greed and drunkenness condemned.

III. **THE PARABLE STATED.**—1. The vineyard was a familiar object in Palestine. 2. The prophet represents himself as singing a song of his friend's vineyard. 3. A study of the vineyard. (1) The owner. (2) The location. (3) The preparation. (4) The vines procured. (5) The crop expected. (6) The disappointment of the owner.

IV. **THE PARABLE EXPLAINED.**—1. The explanation of the parable is by parable. 2. The men of Judah were capable of saying what ought to be done with a vineyard of that kind. 3. They could tell whether the owner could have done anything more or not. 4. Note the conclusion reached by the owner. 5. The vineyard abandoned. More than that, the vineyard under a curse. 6. The men of Judah could thus far approve of the inferences drawn from the parable. 7. The open charge that the vineyard was the house of Israel, and the pleasant plant, the men of Judah. The inference is plain that Jehovah was the owner. 8. The deplorable condition of those who are given over by the Lord. 9. The kind of fruit the Jewish nation had brought forth in contrast to what was expected.

V. **THE PARABLE APPLIED.**—1. Note the six "woes" of the chapter. One is directly against covetousness, two against drunkenness, and three against defying God. 2. The shame that such fruits should be produced when God had provided for something infinitely better. 3. The sin of covetousness. (1) Its root is selfishness. (2) It leads to oppression of every kind. 4. The sin of intemperance. (1) Its root is a depraved appetite. (2) It grows upon the individual who indulges. (3) It is shameless and conscienceless. (4) It tramples upon all law, human and divine. (5) It enlists for its advancement every agency that will serve its purpose. 5. Total abstinence for the individual and prohibition for the nation. 6. The relation between greed and the liquor traffic.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—A nation's career.

- I. Its formation and opportunities stated.
- II. Its principles and practises portrayed.
- III. Its destruction and woe foretold.


I. **Its formation and opportunities stated.** We have in this parable a summing up of the history of God's people, human life in parable. History proves that the Jewish nation had enjoyed every condition of blessedness, every opportunity of fruitfulness and service. They were given peculiar religious privileges as well as a most perfect situation in the land of Canaan. God set up a pure religion among them, gave them a most excellent law, instituted ordinances to keep up their association with him. They had everything requisite for instruction, direction and quickening in spiritual life. No inducements were wanting. All arguments were used and all opportunities offered. They had the scriptures, a standing ministry in the priests and Levites, besides what was extraordinary in the prophets. No other nation had statutes and

judgments so righteous. God set apart this people that he might make himself known to the world through them. He blessed them in temporal matters. He shielded them from contending nations. He witnessed to them in their acts of worship. In every way they had opportunity to be a holy people, and yet they transgressed sadly.

II. **Its principles and practises portrayed.** In this parable we have a general reproof to the Jews for their wickedness. Their history is written for our warning. No nation, city or individual who forgets God shall prosper. God expects vineyard fruit from those who enjoy vineyard privileges. He expects a loyal heart and a good life, with pure thoughts and affections, and clean words and actions from those for whom he cares. God's purpose in man is answered when he sees formed in him his own moral likeness. Where grace does not work, corruption will. No reasonable excuse could be offered by the Jewish nation for their walking so contrary to God's law. One of the most subtle weaknesses of human nature is that power which men possess of perceiving general truth without at the same time perceiving its peculiar bearing on themselves. It was about in that way the nation regarded the messages of the prophets. Vice, when diffused through a nation must have a fatal influence over the whole community and at last accomplish the destruction of it. National responsibility does not obliterate, but gathers together and organizes personal responsibility. Judah in its dispersion and miseries is a standing witness to the certainty with which national calamity overtakes national contempt of God. Covetousness and sensuality are two great causes of man's neglect of God. History is repeated all down through the ages. The old land and liquor laws troubled the Jews as they do men to this day. The prevention of monopoly in land was clearly in the mind of the Hebrew law-giver and yet the Jews were deeply guilty in their dealings. Sensuality ruined them as certainly as worldliness and oppression. When such errors and corruptions, vice and immorality go without check or control the vineyard may be said to be undressed. Is it not a disappointment when God looks upon pride, passion, discontent and malice in the human heart where humility, meekness, patience and love should be? Instead of prayer and praise he found cursing and revelry. Intemperance with its associate habits of festivity and dissipation follow in the train of such sins as the prophet likened to wild grapes.

III. **Its destruction and woe foretold.** God awakens sinners to repentance by convincing them of sin and by showing them their misery and danger. Woe comes to those who set their hearts on the wealth of the world. There is a woe to those who are engrossed with the pleasures and delights of sense. Strong drink dispenses its sorrows with accuracy. The prophet did not overdraw the picture of Judah's future woe and destruction. T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

<p>THE SONGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH WERE TURNED INTO MOCKERY THROUGH STRONG DRINK. IN THE PLACE OF JOY THERE WAS SORROW.</p>		<p>STRONG DRINK HAS CAUSED GREAT SUFFERING, SICKNESS, POVERTY, CRIES. IS IT NOT TIME TO DESTROY THIS EVIL?</p>
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Practical Applications

Woe to the covetous. "Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field" (v. 8). "Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his" (Hab. 2: 6). "Woe to him that gaineth an evil gain" (Hab. 2: 9, margin). Woe to Lot who covets the land that lies in the direction of Sodom; he shall lose all and escape only with his life (Gen. 13: 10; 19: 15-22). Woe to Gehazi who covets the gold and silver and changes of raiment; the leprosy of Naaman is his punishment (2 Kings 5: 27). Woe to David who covets another's wife. The child of his love is the penalty for his sin (2 Sam. 12: 15). Woe to Ananias and Sapphira who covet a reputation for generosity; swift death smites them (Acts 4: 36, 37; 5: 1-11). "Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness" (Hab. 2: 9), for no covetous man "hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph. 5: 5).

Warn the wine-drinker. Why should we hesitate to warn men when wine-drinking results in such dreadful sins as, 1. Irreverence. "They regard not the work of the Lord" (v. 12). "They have cast away the law of the Lord... and despised the word of the Holy One" (v. 24). Men who disobey the law of the Lord and disregard the word of the Lord through his prophets, are subject to punishment; but they who despise his law and pour contempt upon his word are slaves of the devil and shall be "humbled," and shall be "smitten" with the "anger" of the Lord. 2. Slavery. No other servant of Satan loses as much as the one who is a slave to wine. 3. Hunger. Wine-drinking famishes spirit, soul and body. It is a mistake to suppose that alcohol is nutritious. "Some honestly believe that a barrel of whisky would go as far in supporting a family as would a cow! But this is one of the devil's delusions." 4. Humiliation. W. W. Clark tells of a night-time visit to the Bowery Mission in New York. "It was at the close of the meeting, so we stood by the door. At the platform a dozen men were kneeling as penitents. But our attention was riveted upon a man near by, leaning forward to catch every word of what was said. A refined, intelligent, gentlemanly face was concealed behind a patch of mud and clots of blood. His clothes were torn and covered with dirt from the gutter. Soon he rose and hastened toward the door, when I took him by the arm and pulled him back. 'My friend, you are in trouble and we are here to help you.' Startled at being held, he stood erect and faced us. Two bruises were on his head and the blood was dripping from a cut on his chin down upon a clean shirt and collar. 'Yes,' said he, 'I am in great trouble, I assure you. This morning I left the hospital and I am still very weak. I have had but three drinks and I've got but fifteen cents left to get some more and then'— 'Stay,' we said, 'come here,' and we put him in the hands of John Wyburn, who had been there himself and who knew what to do with a man that was down. At the wash-basin the dirt and blood were removed from as refined a face as I ever saw, and the promise of coffee and food in the restaurant below, with a clean bed above, brought from him the kindest expressions of gratitude. Who was he? A college graduate, a member of a prominent church, a professional man whose name is well known in this community. From a high position of responsibility he had fallen to the depths of a Bowery gutter." 5. Poverty. "Be not among wine bibbers... for the drunkard... shall come to poverty" (Prov. 23: 20, 21). One who drinks alcohol becomes unfitted for business and for labor.

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—God has pronounced a woe against intemperance.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD

JUDAH { Became sinful
Doomed to destruction

THE SIN OF DRUNKENNESS

Preliminary. In reviewing the preceding lesson note the fact that Isaiah is the writer of the present lesson. Write his name on the board and call upon the class to tell a half dozen things about him. Make a list of these answers. They may include, "Was at the temple," "Saw the Lord," "Saw his sinfulness," "Was cleansed," "Heard a call," "Said, 'Here am I; send me.'"

The vineyard. Show how the Lord sent messages to the people by his prophets. Explain that Isaiah had a message to the people of Judah and told them the story of the vineyard to make it clear to them. You can impress the lesson effectively by giving the parable with sufficient explanations to make it interesting, and asking questions about the fruit the vineyard ought to produce. The children will be able to tell you what has been done for them by the Lord, and what kind of lives they ought to live. Tell how the people of Judah failed to be and to do what the Lord intended. Have the children in your class been a disappointment to their parents, their teachers or the Lord?

Judah to be overthrown. Tell some of the good things the nation had done, naming several good kings of Judah. If they had always feared God, and been trustful and obedient, he would not have given them over to be taken into captivity by their enemies. Tell how long it had been since the Lord chose Abraham and his descendants for his own people, and how merciful he had been to them. They had long rebelled against him, and punishment must follow.

Drunkenness. Explain the first woe pronounced in the lesson. It can be made practical by impressing the sin of selfishness. People acquire wealth and keep reaching out for more, thus oppressing the poor. The second woe is against the sin of intemperance. It is a manly thing to declare against the use of all intoxicating liquors, as cider, beer, wine, whisky, rum and gin. Impress the truth that it is exceedingly dangerous to begin the use of alcoholic drink. Children have become drunkards by draining out the few drops of liquor left in the glass after the father had been drinking. It is folly to be deceived into the sin of intemperance. Dean Swift wrote: "A man seeing a wasp creeping into a bottle filled with honey that was hanging on a fruit tree, said, 'Why, you sottish insect, you are mad to go into that vial when you can see many of your kind there dying in it before you.' 'The reproach is just,' answered the wasp, 'but not from you men, who are so far from taking example from other people's follies that you will not take warning from your own. If after falling several times into this vial and escaping by chance I should fall in again, I should then but resemble you.'"

LESSON IX

HOME READINGS.—Mon., May 22.—Universal peace.—Mic. 4:1-8. Tu.—Wounds incurable.—Mic. 1:1-16. Wed.—Jehovah, their king.—Mic. 2:1-13. Th.—Jehovah in the midst.—Mic. 3:1-12. Fr.—Thou shalt be rescued.—Mic. 4:9-5:1. Sat.—Shall feed his flock.—Mic. 5:1-15. Su.—Who pardoneth like unto God?—Mic. 6:1-7:20.

MICAH'S PICTURE OF UNIVERSAL PEACE—International Peace Lesson.—Mic. 4:1-8.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 2, 3)

SUPT.—1 But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.

School.—2 And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Ja'cob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zi'on, and the word of the Lord from Je-ru'sa-lem.

3 And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

4 But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it.

5 For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.

6 In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that hath-eth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted;

7 And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the Lord shall reign over them in mount Zi'on from henceforth, even for ever.

8 And thou O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zi'on, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Je-ru'sa-lem.

*AMERICAN REVISION

1 But in the latter days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow unto it. 2 And many nations shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem; 3 and he will judge between many peoples, and will decide concerning strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. 4 But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of Jehovah of hosts hath spoken it. 5 For all the peoples walk every one in the name of his god; and we will walk in the name of Jehovah our God for ever and ever.

6 In that day, saith Jehovah, will I assemble that which is lame, and I will gather that which is driven away, and that which I have afflicted; 7 and I will make that which was lame a remnant, and that which was cast far off a strong nation: and Jehovah will reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth even for ever. 8 And thou, O tower of the flock, the hill of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, yea, the former dominion shall come, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—Nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. Mic. 4:3.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—The Kingdom of Christ is one of peace.

TOPIC.—Universal peace.

OUTLINE.—I. The Messianic kingdom. II. A reign of peace. III. The restoration of the Jews.

TIME.—From B. C. 744 to B. C. 697.

PLACE.—The land of Judah.

PARALLEL ACCOUNT.—Isa. 2:2-4.

READ.—Mic. 1-7.

INTRODUCTION.—Micah, whose home was in Moresheth, a town near Eleutheropolis, lying west of Jerusalem on the border of the Philistine country, was the sixth of the minor prophets, according to the arrangement in the Authorized Version, and prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (Mic. 1:1). If his prophecies covered the entire time of these three kings, he was active for a period of fifty-nine years; but if he commenced his work as a prophet near the close of Jotham's reign, and ceased shortly after the beginning of Hezekiah's, his prophetic ministry was about sixteen years. His prophecies involved both kingdoms of Israel, but were directed particularly to Judah. He was contemporary with Isaiah and Hosea, the former of whom he resembled in the subject and style of his writings. The prophecy may be divided into three parts, each of which begins with, "Hear," and each closes with a promise. The first part includes the first two chapters, the second, the next three, and the third, the last two. Micah predicted the overthrow of the kingdom of Israel and the destruction of Samaria (1:6, 7), the destruction of Jerusalem (3:12; 7:13) and the captivity of the Jews in Babylon (4:10), the return from captivity (4:6, 7) and the coming Messiah (4:1, 2, 8;

5:2). This prophecy is remarkable in that it predicts the very town in which the Messiah was to be born (5:2), and the students of the law thus understood it and informed Herod at the time the wise men were inquiring for the infant Christ.

COMMENTARY.—I. THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM (vs. 1, 2). 1. but—This word denotes a sharp transition from the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, at the close of the preceding chapter, to the comforting prediction here recorded. In the last days—"In the latter days."—R. V. "In the days to come." the mountain of the house of the Lord—According to the last verse of the preceding chapter, the place was to become as a forest, but later a place of power and beauty. "Under Messiah, its elevation is to be not that of situation, but of moral dignity."—J. F. & B. top of the mountains—This is not intended to include Mount Moriah only, but Jerusalem as a whole. exalted—The condition of the Jewish nation in Micah's time was deplorable. The people were given over to idolatry and rebellion against God, but the prophet in his vision saw the blessedness and the glory of the kingdom of Christ. people shall flow unto it—In Isaiah 2:2 the language is, "All nations shall flow unto it," signifying that the kingdom of Christ was to be for all the world. The verb translated "shall flow" is "only used figuratively of the movements of masses of men to great centers." When Jesus gave his final commission to his disciples he expressed the idea that Christianity is world-wide in its scope, saying, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"

(Mark 16:15). Divine love and mercy permeate the Christian system. The gospel is adapted to all races, all ages, all climes, in short, to all conditions of mankind, and hence all peoples are attracted to it.

2. many nations—Only one nation was directly included in the covenant made with Israel, but in the new kingdom, which the prophet saw in his vision, all nations may have a place. **the mountain of the Lord house of the God of Jacob** The picture of Jerusalem as the religious metropolis of the world is shown to us by the prophets (Isa. 11:10; 60:3; Jer. 3:17; Zech. 2:11; 8:22, 23). The Christian reason, enlightened by the course of providence, sees that the picture is ideal.—*Cam. Bible*, **he will teach**—Jehovah will declare his will to the nations. This is being done by (1) the word of God, distributed by numerous agencies, (2) the preaching of the gospel in many lands, (3) the lives and testimony of Christians, and (4) the direct agency of the Holy Spirit. **we will walk in his paths**—The prophet saw the nations not simply learning the truths pertaining to the kingdom of heaven, but also walking in accordance with them. In the present age, when the truth is so accessible, men are responsible both for knowing the will of God and doing it. **law shall go forth of Zion**—Jerusalem was to be the center from which the great truths of the atonement should proceed. The apostles were to be witnesses unto Jesus to "the uttermost part of the earth," beginning at Jerusalem.

II. A REIGN OF PEACE (vs. 3, 4). 3. Judge among many people—God shall sit as the Arbitrator between nations and shall cause "wars to cease unto the end of the earth" (Psa. 46:9). "In spite of the stirring phrase, 'Jehovah of hosts,' the prophetic ideal includes the ultimate extinction of war, to which this passage adds arbitration."—*Chryne*, **rebuke strong nations afar off**—The meaning, of course, is that disputes which would otherwise have been settled by the sword are referred to the just and impartial arbitrament of Jehovah, whose award is accepted as final.—*Skinner*. The Revised Version has, instead of "rebuke," "decide concerning," **swords into plowshares spears into pruninghooks**—A figure strongly setting forth the change from a condition of war to one of peace. This figure is reversed in Joel 3:10, **nation shall not lift up a sword against nation**—There can be no war where the truths of the Messiah's kingdom are recognized and fully obeyed. The cause of war is always some wrong, actually done, or threatened or suspected, and when wrong is done away with there can be no war. Christ came as the "Prince of Peace," and his kingdom is a peaceable kingdom. His followers partake of his spirit and are averse to war. The church of Jesus Christ is made up of those who love peace. The International Peace movement has assumed vast proportions during the last dozen years. Twice during that time a parliament of the world has met at The Hague, with twenty-six nations attending the first and forty-four attending the second meeting, to plan how all differences between nations can be settled without resorting to arms. A world's tribunal has been established to sit in judgment over the controversies between nations, and, while it is not yet perfect or all that it is desired to be, progress has been made to such a degree that it can be reasonably hoped that all differences will be adjusted without war. "Public opinion in favor of peace has become so powerful that thirty-five nations voted for obligatory arbitration, and they represented in round numbers 1,300,000,000 inhabitants, as against nine nations with a little over 200,000,000

people who either refrained from voting or voted against it."—*Bartholdt*. Aside from the cruelty of war and all the evils connected with it, the loss of life, the loss of health, the loss of character, the tears, the heartache, the desolation, the cost is enormous. In the United States alone the annual cost of the army, the navy, fortifications, and the sum paid yearly on account of wars that are past amount in round numbers to \$400,000,000, which is more than seventy per cent of all moneys collected by the government from all sources except postal receipts. The world will be making progress indeed when it can be said that the nations learn war no more.

4. every man under his vine, etc.—The vine and the fig-tree were the typical fruit-bearing plants in Palestine. The ideal of peace and plenty was for each family to enjoy the possession of sufficient land to produce a comfortable support. In a spiritual sense God's people have peace, contentment, abundance and the favor of the Lord. Most of the poverty and all the strife and unrest of the world come through sin. **none shall make them afraid**—An ideal condition in temporal things. God's people dwell in quietness and assurance, for "perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18). **the Lord of hosts hath spoken it**—Therefore it must come to pass, however unlikely now it may seem.—*J. F. & B.*

III. THE RESTORATION OF THE JEWS (vs. 5-8). 5. every one in the name of his god—This verse appears to be the sentiment of the Jews during the captivity. The Gentiles were following their various idolatrous tendencies, and because the people of Judah had persistently gone after other gods they were undergoing a punishment of seventy years' duration. **we will walk in the name of . . . our God**—The "name" of God is that side of his nature which can be revealed in man; and to walk in his name means to live in mystic union with God as he has revealed himself, and under his protection.—*Cam. Bible*, **for ever and ever**—The idolaters walked in the name of their gods during a brief earthly life, but the Jews, permanently cured of idolatry, resolved to walk always with God. **6. in that day**—Of the return from captivity. **assemble her that baltheth**—This and the following expressions are a promise of the return from captivity of the Jews who were weakened by idolatry, driven out into exile and variously afflicted. This verse is capable of a deeply spiritual application. **7. a remnant**—The afflicted people should yet be restored. **strong nation**—There is interwoven with the promise of Judah's restoration a prophecy of the glory of the coming Messianic kingdom. **8. tower of the flock**—Jerusalem. As the shepherds had their watch-towers for protection, so Jerusalem is represented as watching over the flock of Israel. **first dominion**—"Former dominion."—*R. V.* The dominion formerly exercised should return.

QUESTIONS.—In the time of what kings did Micah prophesy? What prophets were contemporary with him? Into what parts may his prophecy be divided? Name several predictions which he made? What is meant by "the top of the mountains"? In what period was Jerusalem to be especially prominent? Where would the nations seek knowledge of the ways of the Lord? What expressions are there in the lesson that favor peace between nations? What thought is prominent in the fourth verse? What expression shows that the Jews were cured of idolatry? Explain the sixth verse. What can we do toward establishing peace?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. Review the parable of the vineyard and renew the application. 2. A study of the prophet Micah. (1) His ancestry unknown. (2) His place of residence. (3) The period during which he lived. 3. The chief predictions in his prophecy. 4. His prediction of the place of Christ's birth. 5. Contemporary prophets.

II. THEME.—Christ's reign, a reign of peace.

III. MESSIAH'S KINGDOM.—1. The condition of Judah during Micah's time. 2. The prophecies of the coming Messiah. 3. The Jewish idea of the Messiah. 4. The language used is expressive of lofty ideas of the coming Christ. 5. God's covenant with Israel. 6. The universality of the new kingdom. 7. The power of the Messianic kingdom. 8. The relation of Jerusalem to that dominion. 9. The effect of Christ's kingdom upon the world since it appeared. 10. The effect of Christ's reign in the human heart.

IV. A REIGN OF PEACE.—1. One of the names of Christ in prophecy, the Prince of Peace. 2. His nature was opposed to strife and war. 3. He came as a king to have dominion in the hearts of men. 4. His conquest is by love. 5. The evils of war in all ages. 6. The causes of war. 7. The movement among the nations looking toward universal peace. 8. Jehovah the judge of nations. 9. The idea of arbitration in verse three. 10. A study of the expressions in the lesson which favor peace. 11. The sad example of so-called Christian nations engaged in war. 12. The time when nations shall learn war no more.

V. A RESTORED NATION.—1. The mingling of the prophecies of the restoration of Judah from captivity and the Messianic kingdom. 2. The besetting sin of Judah was idolatry, and for this sin was the Babylonian captivity. 3. The prophecy of the nation's cure of idolatry. 4. God's mercy and love shown in the captivity of the Jews and their restoration. 5. God's dealings with people now are to the end that they may be cured of sin. 6. The outlook for Judah and Jerusalem after the restoration. 7. The blessings awaiting those who accept fully of God's words and ways.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Universal peace.

I. The sure word of prophecy.
II. The ultimate triumph of Christianity.
I. The sure word of prophecy. The gift of prophecy would have been to its possessor a source of extreme sadness if it had been restricted to the dark passages of human history only. The prophet lifted his eyes away to the later days to gain refreshment in his immediate toil. Without this anticipation of a golden age he must have lost his buoyancy and the spirit of endeavor would have gone out of his work. The great event of this prophecy is the focus of all prophecy. Its mere existence is a sentence of condemnation upon war. The conscience of mankind acknowledges that while wars continue there is something not altogether right in the world. Micah lifts us up to the higher international atmosphere toward which we should aspire. He shows us nations persuaded and constrained into mutual peace by a common reverence for the righteous and merciful God. A biblical ideal of true concord among the nations has been beckoning on mankind through the ages though men have been slow to pay it due homage, and yet this prophecy of peace shall come to pass

through the activity of men, for all nations shall yet acknowledge the God of Israel. The tower of peace stands side by side with the tower of righteousness. No energy is to be destroyed but transfigured. There shall be the conversion of merely destructive force into positive and constructive ministries. Righteousness will be both the basis and substance of the international code. In the mountain of the Lord's house the people will discover their unity and kinship. Ever since the fall man has hated and oppressed his fellow men. The sooner the business of constructing implements of war becomes unnecessary the better for mankind. "Thirty-five times the present population of the earth have fallen in battle." No argument is necessary to prove that physical force can never settle the right and wrong of any question. The principal causes of war are of a moral nature. The many fulfilled prophecies assure us of the fulfillment of the rest. We therefore both look and labor for the time when every feature of this prophecy shall be realized. Our visions determine our tasks while our dominant thought regulates our activities. We must enter upon our work with visions of the later days, and let our activities bring the golden age as near to our generation as possible.

II. The ultimate triumph of Christianity. The prophets frequently described what they saw with spiritual eyes after the form of something which could be seen by the natural eye. Strength and stability are represented by mountains. A mountain is a fixed, a stable thing, a place of safety and retreat, a source of streams and rivulets, the spot, standing on which we can see the greatest distance. Under this significant image the prophet exhibits to us the moral grandeur and elevation of the Christian church. The last days of the gospel are predicted as the brightest, when philosophy, idolatry, superstition and errors of all kinds shall no longer obstruct the view or obscure the glory of the church of Christ. The truest way to overcome and conquer difficulties is to go up into the loftier region where they cease to be difficulties. Darkened minds will be enlightened and the forces of evil will give way quicker when Christians "live above the world and sin, with hearts made pure and garments white, and Christ enthroned within." The gospel appeals to the mind and heart with an illumination and efficacy unknown to any other system or in any other department of inquiry. It exerts a remarkable influence on the character and destiny of man. The best religion should be attended with the greatest devotion and the most holy lives. The tendency of the religion of Jesus Christ is to bind the whole world in brotherhood. Jesus appeared in the world as the Prince of Peace. Universal and unmolested brotherhood between man and man, and nation and nation is a promise of the gospel. Christianity stands pledged for the destruction of sin, the great primal cause of ignorance, error, violence, war and bloodshed.

T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

<p>THERE ARE SIGNS OF THIS REIGN OF UNIVERSAL PEACE. ALL NATIONS ARE LONGING FOR PEACE. LET US PRAY FOR IT.</p>		<p>THE ANGELIC SONG IS DESTINED TO FILL THE EARTH. PEACE UPON EARTH GOOD WILL UNTO MEN.</p>
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Practical Applications

"People shall flow unto it" (v. 1). There is an attractive power in true religion. It has been demonstrated over and over again that people flock in great numbers to the place where the Spirit of the Lord is poured out in abundant measure. The Holy Spirit draws, and a longing is awakened in unregenerate hearts to receive the blessing that is coming to others. People flocked together to celebrate the great Passover which Hezekiah proclaimed throughout the kingdoms of Israel, and the feast was prolonged to twice the usual length, because there was great encouragement and blessing in it (2 Chron. 30). At Pentecost interest ran high because of the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Those who go up to the house of God and receive the blessing which he designs to give, go forth from thence to spread the fire among their own people. Fine church edifices, fine talent in the pulpit, superior musical programs, without the rich outpouring of the Holy Spirit amount to little. The presence of the Lord is the great essential.

"He will teach us of his ways" (v. 2). His ways are peace (Prov. 3: 17), are free from iniquity (Psa. 119: 3), are kept by those who love God (Deut. 19: 9), are safe (Isa. 35: 9), are joyous and lead to heaven (Isa. 35: 10). Those who are earnest in approaching God learn rapidly about his ways. He teaches by various means. 1. By the scriptures. 2. By the Holy Spirit. 3. By the preaching of the word. 4. By the experiences of others. 5. By his providential dealings. There are many hindrances to learning God's ways. 1. Pride. 2. Self-will. 3. Unbelief. 4. Worldliness in all its forms. The prophet Jonah was slow to learn the ways of the Lord, and it required some bitter experiences before he seemed able to walk in them. Judah as a nation rejected instruction for centuries until at length they were placed in the school of a seventy years' captivity in Babylon to learn their lesson.

"Neither shall they learn war" (v. 3). When it is considered what are the prevailing causes of war between nations, what are the tactics by which war is carried on, the cost in money and lives, and the results in general, it is not surprising to note that when God's will shall be fully accomplished, war will be a thing of the past. The proclamation of the angels at the birth of Christ gave an indication of the character of the kingdom he was to establish (Luke 2: 14). The principles of Christianity are opposed to contention and strife, and when those principles are accorded their proper place in the hearts of men and in the laws of nations wars will cease.

"None shall make them afraid" (v. 4). The figure here used denotes both peace and plenty. The ordinary Oriental salutation was, "Is it peace?" If the answer was, "It is peace," all was well; but if the answer indicated a lack of peace, there was trouble at hand. In the kingdom of Christ there is peace, and there is peace in the hearts of those who belong to Christ. For one to sit "under his vine and his fig tree" was to be peaceful and satisfied. It was when Israel disobeyed God that other peoples were permitted to come in and eat the fruits that they should have had for their own. It is when we disobey God that we lose the peace and joy that he designs us to have. Fear comes from a lack of love, devotion and faith. The "fear nots" which are generously scattered through the scriptures are an assurance to us that God intends us to be trustful and contented in his will. In this condition we have the peace which passeth understanding.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—Jesus came to bring peace to men and to nations.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

MESSIAH'S KINGDOM
JUDAH'S { Captivity
Restoration
JESUS THE PRINCE OF PEACE

From Isaiah to Micah. Do not fail to refer to the preceding lesson long enough to make its prominent teachings impressive. Isaiah and Micah were both prophets and lived at about the same time. Tell the children that a prophet is one who speaks to the people the messages which God gives him, whether those messages relate to something in the future or in the present. Make a list of the prophets whose names the children can give you. Tell the children to what period of Judah's history Micah belongs.

The Messiah's kingdom. Tell the things that Micah saw about the coming of Christ. Refer to the visit of the wise men to Jerusalem in search of the child Jesus and their conversation with Herod. To Herod's inquiry as to where Christ was to be born the chief priests and scribes quoted to him from Micah 5: 2, telling that he was to be born in Bethlehem. It was a miracle of knowledge for Micah to tell it more than seven hundred years before it occurred. Question the class about how Christ came and what blessings he brought to the world. Make a list on the board of the answers which you receive.

Judah's captivity and restoration. Ask questions upon the good kings of Judah and tell the sin that came to prevail among the people, that of worshipping idols. Tell of the many warnings God gave them, and that finally he allowed Nebuchadnezzar to make the nation captives and to take them to Babylon. The Lord permitted Micah to look forward nearly two hundred years to see that captive people in Babylon and to see them set free. The punishment the Jews received during that seventy years cured them of idolatry. Show how hard it must have been for them to be taken far away from their homes into a strange land, and many would not live long enough to return. Sin brings sorrow and punishment.

The Prince of Peace. Since this is an international peace lesson it will be well to spend the greater part of the period in telling about the evils of war and the efforts that are being made to prevent all wars in the future. How do wars begin? How do fights among children begin? for there are such things, sad to say. If everybody was full of love there would be no chance for a fight. If all nations were following the Golden Rule there would be no wars. "She's a person you can't easily pick a quarrel with," said a girl laughingly of a school-mate. "You might abuse her to her face, and in the midst of your tirade, if you are any good at reading faces, you would catch her thinking, 'Poor dear! how it must make your head ache to get in such a temper!' And once it's over, she forgets it. She will not let you break the peace even if you go at it with a hammer!" It was a wise saying by a wise man, "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger" (Prov. 15: 1).

LESSON X

HOME READINGS.—Mon., May 29.—Penitence and pardon.—Hos. 14: 1-9. Tu.—Jehovah will heal.—Hos. 6: 1-11. Wed.—Ephraim a cake not turned.—Hos. 7: 1-16. Th.—Seek Jehovah.—Hos. 10: 1-15. Fr.—I loved Israel.—Hos. 11: 1-12. Sat.—Ephraim feedeth upon wind.—Hos. 12: 1-14. Su.—Israel's destruction.—Hos. 13: 1-16.

ISRAEL'S PENITENCE AND GOD'S PARDON.—Hos. 14: 1-9.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 4-6)

SUPT.—1 O Is'ra-el, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.

School.—2 Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.

3 Assh'ur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

4 I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.

5 I will be as the dew unto Is'ra-el: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Leb'a-non.

6 His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Leb'a-non.

7 They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Leb'a-non.

8 Ephra-im shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found.

9 Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.

*AMERICAN REVISION

1 O Israel, return unto Jehovah thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. 2 Take with you words, and return unto Jehovah; say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and accept that which is good; so will we render as bullocks the offering of our lips. 3 Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods; for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

4 I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him. 5 I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall blossom as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. 6 His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon. 7 They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the grain, and blossom as the vine; the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. 8 Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have answered, and will regard him: I am like a green fir-tree; from me is thy fruit found.

9 Who is wise, that he may understand these things? prudent, that he may know them? for the ways of Jehovah are light, and the just shall walk in them; but transgressors shall fall therein.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger. Neh. 9: 17.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—Repentance and faith are conditions of salvation.

TOPIC.—Timely admonitions.

OUTLINE.—I. The prophet's appeal. II. Israel's prayer. III. The Lord's promise. IV. Israel restored.

TIME.—Hosea's prophetic ministry closed about B. C. 725.

PLACE.—The kingdom of Israel.

READ.—Hos. 11-14.

INTRODUCTION.—Little is known of the ancestry of the prophet Hosea. He was the son of Beeri, but we are not told to what tribe he belonged, although it seems certain that he was a native of the northern kingdom from the character of his writings and from the fact that he was a prophet to the kingdom of Israel. From the first verse of his prophecy we learn that he prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and Jeroboam II, king of Israel. It is uncertain how long his prophetic career continued. Some place it as high as sixty years, while others incline to think it was much less. Hosea dwells upon the sinfulness of Israel, especially with respect to idolatry, and calls the nation to repentance with the promise of full forgiveness on condition that they return to him. A reading of the prophecy reveals to us the fact that the prophet had married a young woman, named Gomer, with whom he was for a time happy, but later he learned that she was unfaithful. His love for her led him to seek to turn her from her evil ways, but to no purpose. She went away and through her sinful course became a slave. Hosea even then did not give her up, but bought her back from slavery and succeeded in restoring her to himself. Under this figure the prophet represents the love of God for Israel, his chosen people, and although they had been unfaithful to him, he had sought over and over again to bring them back to himself, with the promise that he would "love them freely." There is a pathetic tenderness that runs

through the whole book, which reveals the character of the prophet. Stanley says: "His prophecy is, as it has been beautifully described, a succession of signs, a prophetic voice from the depth of human misery. The words of upbraiding, of judgment, of woe burst out one by one, slowly, heavily, condensed, abrupt, from the prophet's heavy and shrinking soul, as though each sentence burst with a groan from his heart and he had anew to take breath before he uttered each repeated woe. In Hosea's grief for his own great calamity he was taught to feel for God's grief over the lost opportunities of the nation. Each verse forms a whole for itself, like one heavy toll in a funeral knell. But in his own love no less was he taught to see, first among the prophets of the old dispensation, the power of the forgiving love of God. This is especially emphasized in the passage selected to be our lesson."

COMMENTARY.—I. THE PROPHET'S APPEAL (vs. 1, 2). 1. O Israel.—The prophet spoke with earnestness out of a full heart. He longed for the moral elevation of his people. return unto the Lord.—They had voluntarily gone away from God, and they must of their own will return. There could, in the nature of the case, be no compulsion, since man is endowed with the power of choice. The entreaty to return "is the key-note of the prophecy. This warning is the most needed and the weightiest. All God's judgments have this as their aim." for thou hast fallen.—They had fallen from a position of spiritual and material greatness through their persistent sinning. The prophet is as forceful in declaring the deplorable state of Israel as he is solicitous for their return to God. There will be no strong and effectual purpose to return to God on the part of the sinner without a clear realization of his sinfulness. Added to this must be the consciousness that he has fallen by his own iniquity. 2. take with you words.—The people of Israel were by Jewish law required to present themselves at the house of the Lord

three times a year, and they were warned not to appear before him empty (Exod. 23:14-17). They had deeply sinned, and in order to obtain forgiveness, they were exhorted to bring, instead of animals for burnt-offerings, words of hearty repentance and confession. No amount of material gifts could take the place of heartfelt penitence. **turn to the Lord**—Not simply an outward return is intended, but such a return as includes a change of purpose, a change of heart, and a change of masters. **say unto him**—The sinner has to deal directly with God. David said, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles" (Psa. 34:6). The publican said, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13), and he went home a saved man. The road of confession is a difficult one to travel. It is frequently the case, when trouble arises, that the one who is in the wrong is unwilling to confess it and ask pardon, but attempts to make amends by showing unusual kindness to the injured one. A sentence or two of hearty acknowledgment, where wrong has been done, is of more avail than volumes of pleasant words without the needed confession.

II. ISRAEL'S PRAYER (vs. 2, 3). **2. take away all iniquity**—This and the following expressions, including the third verse, form the prayer which the prophet urged the people of Israel to offer. The above petition involves two things: a confession of sin, and an earnest desire for its removal. The people had reached a point where they desired deliverance from "all iniquity." Too many there are who cling to a cherished sin, an evil habit, sinful pleasures or associates. **receive us graciously**—"Accept that which is good."—*R.* **5. Accept our cry of penitence which is hearty, and our vows; and accept us, freed from iniquity. will we render**—We realize our obligation to thee, and will make our offering to thee. **the calves of our lips**—Under the figure of a sacrifice to God, is represented an offering of praise and thanksgiving. The suppliant would make his vows of obedience to the Most High. **3. Asshur shall not save us**—Asshur means Assyria. Israel had appealed for help to that nation in their adversity, but they were pledging themselves not to apply to them, nor to Egypt any more. **will not ride upon horses**—The people had depended upon the horses and chariots of Egypt. "Horses" here typifies Egypt. **the work of our hands**—This is a renunciation of idolatry. This verse includes a threefold pledge, a renunciation of Assyria, of Egypt and of idolatry, which indicated a change in associations, in confidence and in religion. **the fatherless**—Israel felt themselves destitute and desolate when separated from the true God. The Lord has promised to be a Father to those who separate themselves from the unclean (2 Cor. 6:17, 18). The scriptures make prominent the thought that God exercises a parental care over his children. "A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation" (Psa. 68:5). Jesus said, "I will not leave you orphans: I will come to you" (John 14:18, margin).

III. THE LORD'S PROMISE (vs. 4-6). **4. I will heal their backslidings**—This was God's answer to their sincere and earnest prayer. The backsliding refers especially to their idolatry. From this they had suffered, but relief was at hand. Repentance, confession and faith appeal effectually to God in the case of a backslider, as well as of one who has never been converted. **will love them freely**—With an overflowing love. God's nature is love and it goes out spontaneously to those who truly return to him. **mine anger**—Displeasure at

sin. him—Israel. **5. as the dew**—Rather, as the night mist, that is, the mists of vapor brought by the damp westerly winds of summer.—*Cheyne*. These are abundant, and make up in part for the lack of rain during the dry season in Palestine. This means growth. **the lily** The lily of the East is abundant and noted for its beauty. As many as fifty blossoms have been produced from one bulb. **his roots as Lebanon**—As the preceding figure means abundance and beauty, this means strength and stability. Two interpretations are given. One view is, that reference is made to the trees of Lebanon, whose roots penetrate the soil to a depth equal in distance to that of the height of the tree. The other view is that reference is made to the mountain which "rises from great roots, cast out across the land like those of some giant oak."—*G. A. Smith*. Either figure brings out the thought of steadfastness. **6. the olive tree**—The promise is not yet complete. The lily implies growth and beauty, Lebanon, permanence, and the olive, fruitfulness. "The fruitful, peace-bearing, fragrant, ever-green olive is added."—*J., F. & B.* **smell as Lebanon**—Here the idea is that of fragrance. Lebanon abounds in sweet-smelling trees and plants.

IV. ISRAEL RESTORED (vs. 7-9). **7. under his shadow**—Under the protection and control of Israel. **revive as the corn**—As the grain is sown in the ground, appearing to be without life, and soon shoots forth and grows, so the people of Israel shall revive upon their return to the Lord. **grow as the vine**—The vine in that land flourished, and was an expressive symbol of fruitfulness.—*Douglas*. **as the wine of Lebanon**—The vine is still largely cultivated in every part of Lebanon, but the finest grapes of Syria are those of Helbon, a village in the Antilibanus district, a little north of Damascus, precisely as in the days of Ezekiel and Nebuchadnezzar.—*Lenormant*. **8. Ephraim**—The leading tribes of the northern kingdom and hence often stands for Israel. **idols**—The expression indicates a thorough giving up of every form of idolatry. **I have heard**—The Lord regarded the vow which Israel made. **like a green fir tree**—Israel's own statement. This tree is large and beautiful, green all the year round. **from me is thy fruit found**—The Lord declared himself the source of Israel's fruitfulness. This verse seems to be a conversation between the Lord and Israel. **9. wise... prudent**—Those who hear the word of God and live in harmony with it. The prophet here sums up the truths expressed in the previous teaching. **ways of the Lord are right**—They are marked out by him who is infinite in wisdom and holiness. They are the happiest and most useful who walk in them. **just**—Righteous. **transgressors shall fall therein**—The wicked stumble at the righteous requirements of Jehovah. They are unwilling to yield themselves to God, hence go on blindly toward ruin. The commands of God stand at the entrance to the ways of God. Those who rebel against those commands stumble over them to their own destruction.

QUESTIONS.—At what time did Hosea prophesy? To whom did he bear God's message? What reprofs did he bring? What kind of spirit does he manifest in his writings? What entreaty does he make to Israel? What was Israel's need? How could the people of Israel return to the Lord? What was Israel willing to do in order to find mercy? What is the attitude of God toward those who have forsaken him? What expressions are used showing the blessings promised to those who return to him? In what sense are the people of God like the lily? Lebanon? The olive-tree? The fir-tree?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. Connect this lesson with the preceding one. (1) Nearly the same time. (2) Each written by a minor prophet. (3) Micah wrote to Judah, Hosea to Israel. Degenerate days in both kingdoms. 2. A study of Hosea. (1) Ancestry. (2) Date of prophetic ministry. Closed a few years before the captivity of Israel. (3) The burden of his prophecy. (4) His loving, tender spirit. 3. The lesson throughout is capable of evangelical application.

II. THEME.—Returning to the Lord.

III. THE CALL TO RETURN.—1. The bearer of the call was one of Israel's own sons. God calls men by men. 2. The spirit in which the call was made. 3. The chastening that Hosea had undergone. 4. The need of Israel's returning. Hosea's plain and earnest statement of their condition. 5. The calls previously sent to Israel. 6. The principle upon which God works in continuing the call to return. 7. Who is authorized to extend the call to sinners. 8. How the call comes to men now. (1) Through the ministry of the word. (2) Through the ministry of prayer. (3) Through the ministry of holy living. (4) Through the ministry of sorrow and suffering. (5) Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

IV. THE WAY TO RETURN.—1. A consciousness of need is essential. 2. A fixed determination. 3. A renunciation of all evil. The things that Israel renounced. 4. The one who would return must take words. (1) Of repentance. (2) Of confession. (3) Of faith. 5. The heart-cry unto God. Examples from the scriptures. 6. The sole dependence must be upon God. 7. Full submission to God's way.

V. THE FRUITS OF RETURNING.—1. Backslidings healed. 2. The full and satisfying measure of divine love. 3. The manifest approval of God. 4. Growth. The dew. 5. Abundance and beauty. The lily. 6. Permanence. Lebanon. 7. Fruitfulness. The olive-tree. 8. The change represented as having come over Israel. 9. Examples in the Bible of those who have returned to God. 10. The experience is that of the heart. 11. It is expected even by sinners that those who return to the Lord shall be different from what they were before. 12. A contrast between the "wise" and "prudent" and the "transgressor." 13. Everything of true value belongs to those who return to the Lord.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Timely admonitions.

I. Suited to penitent sinners.


II. Connected with promises of mercy.

I. Suited to penitent sinners. "O Israel, return." We have here a fervent and tender appeal to Israel to come back to God. The divine love is content with nothing less than return, nothing else will give safety. None are safe at any time only as they are kept by the power of God. The predominating sin of Israel was the worship of idols. Idolatry referred to in the Bible is always associated with moral debasement. It was in the days of Hosea that idolatry was first universally set up and countenanced by regal power. Israel's alienation was not only offensive to God but was also hurtful to themselves. They had fallen from their allegiance to God, from his worship and from the enjoyment of his favor. This chapter contains a statement of facts with reference to Israel's past conduct and present opportunities and their future blessedness

if attentive to the prophet's entreaties. In the history of Israel we see the perverseness and ingratitude of man and the forbearance and goodness of God. No individual or nation can pursue the path of sin and escape ruin. Because men drift from God their lives are a prey to numberless ills. The cause of every man's misery is sin. All sin originates in the apostasy of the human heart from God. The apostate man is fallen not only in position but in character and in conduct. The fall by sin is from the highest relationships the soul can enjoy, from life's great purpose, from truest content of the soul, and is a loss of the truest power. No qualification can be compared to that of a holy character. Israel's fall did not forfeit God's claim upon them. He sought after them long after they forsook him. The prophet shows the cause and cure of all their ills. The cause was unfaithfulness to God and the cure must be a returning to him with the whole heart. The removal of sin must take place in order to Israel's restoration. Iniquity alone stopped the current of God's favor. Their prayer must be for the removal of iniquity from their affections, consciences, hearts and lives. The callous, unbending, resisting spirit could not receive blessing. Only genuine repentance could do any effectual good. There must be not only a ceasing from their sins but a definite retracing of their steps. When truly penitent there would be no cavil or reasoning as to the effect, their return to God would have upon their worldly prospects. Renunciation of idols and confession of their guilt with the promise of sincere service was the course indicated as the only surety to divine acceptance. To make their way plain the prophet suggested a form of petition and consecration suited to their need.

II. Connected with promises of mercy. No true penitent has cause for despair, for pardoning love is promised to such. The dew is an emblem of divine grace. What marvelous combination of force and gentleness there is in the dew! Its coming is unseen, silent, gentle, reviving, abundant and free. God works no less mightily because he works in silence. There is something strangely impressive in perfect silence. Yet the grace of God in the soul is an active principle. It insures growth in purity, depth, breadth, beauty and usefulness (vs. 5-7). The divine workings can not be traced but the fruits of the Spirit are manifest. The fragrance of true piety is often felt where it is not acknowledged. It is unnecessary to be anxious about the display of Christian character and piety. Care should be taken about having Christ within filling the soul, and the character will show itself. Rapidity of growth and enlargement of activity, steadfastness of will and purpose, fruit and fragrance, have their place in the truly renewed heart and life. Spiritual beauty is a living product, the natural outgrowth of the life within, dependent upon the nourishment the Fountain of Life supplies. T. B. A.

Blackboard Exercise

<p>OUR PENITENCE SHOULD BE GENUINE IT SHOULD BE FOLLOWED BY GOOD FRUIT. SHOULD BE LASTING.</p>	<p>  </p>	<p>GOD'S PARDON IS FULL, FREE, OR ALL. HE REQUIRES OF US FAITH AND OBEDIENCE.</p>
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Practical Applications

"Thou hast fallen by thine iniquity" (v. 1). A minister's little daughter said to her playmate, "Do you know what a backslider is?" "Yes; a person that used to be a Christian and isn't," said the child promptly. "But what makes them call them backsliders?" "Oh, that's easy; when people are good they go to church and sit up front. When they get a little tired of being good, they slide back a seat, and keep on sliding until they get clear back to the door. After a while they slide clear out and never come back to church at all." We smile at the child's definition, but there is truth in it. "One never suddenly falls from an advanced Christian experience into open sin. The descent is slow and the steps not always perceptible. Little foxes spoil the vines. Little temptations betray to the enemy. Little negligences eat out spiritual joy. By gradual departure from God at length comes apostasy." In Hosea are some of the steps of him who "slideth back" (Hos. 4: 16).

"Take with you words, and turn to the Lord" (v. 2). Bring words of confession. Acknowledge the worst. Say with David, I have sinned (Psa. 51: 4). Confess you have sinned against light and love, against goodness and grace, against Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Christmas Evans says: "I was weary of a cold heart toward Christ, in the pulpit, in secret prayer and in study. For fifteen years previously I had felt my heart burning within, as if going to Emmaus with Jesus. One day ever to be remembered, as I was climbing up toward Cader Idris, I considered it incumbent upon me to pray, however hard my heart or worldly my spirit. Having begun in the name of Jesus, I soon felt the fetters loosening, the hard heart softening, mountains of frost melting within me. This engendered confidence in the promise of the Holy Spirit. I felt relieved of great bondage; tears flowed copiously, and I was constrained to cry out for the gracious visits of God."

"I will heal their backsliding" (v. 4). How tender God is with the backslider after he returns to him! As O. H. Spurgeon suggests: It is as though God said, "My poor people! I do remember they are but dust (Psa. 103: 14). I will not treat them as rebels, but as patients, and they shall look upon me as a physician." Under the legal dispensation the leper must go without the camp (Num. 5: 2, 3). But God does not say, "I will banish them, I will expel them, I will put them in quarantine, I will destroy them." He says, "I will restore them to their first condition of health. I will so heal them that some day without spot or wrinkle they shall see their Father's face."

"I will be as the dew unto Israel" (v. 5). Dew is moisture condensed on the surface of plants, particularly at night. It does not "drop" like rain, but distills on the plant under certain conditions (Deut. 32: 2). Dew in Oriental countries is heavier than in ours and often takes the place of rain. Dew is one of the many types of the Holy Spirit. "The dew of heaven" is the gift of God (Gen. 27: 28, 39; Deut. 33: 13).

"They that dwell under his shadow shall return" (v. 7). Those who have been restored can bless others. "A restored David wrote the thirty-second Psalm; a restored Samson slew more in his death than in his life (Judg. 16: 30); a restored Job was more blessed in his latter end than at the beginning (Job 42: 12); a restored Peter was used to reach three thousand in one day and five thousand another day. Increased vitality brings unparalleled influence."

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—The Lord waits to receive those who turn to him.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

RETURN UNTO THE LORD

P RAYER
P ARDON
P ROSPERITY

Returning to the Lord. The story of the prodigal son could be told with profit for an introduction to this lesson. The young man thought other places and other associations would afford him more advantages than were to be secured at home with his father. He chose to go, he had the power to go and he went. Tell the class the trouble he met, his poverty, his degradation and his determination to return to his father. Compare Israel's condition and prospects, before they departed from God, with those of the son before he became a prodigal. Make another comparison of conditions after the departure of Israel from God and the prodigal from his father. Notice that the only way for either to become prosperous and happy was to return. God sent repeated messages to Israel to return to him. The father of the prodigal was anxious for his son's return and was on the lookout for him. Make the application that the Lord is calling all who are away from him to come to him.

Prayer. Give attention to the prayer which the prophet Hosea urged Israel to offer to the Lord. Notice that it included an acknowledgment of sin. It was a plea for forgiveness and restoration. It contained vows that Israel would do certain things. They would not trust in Assyria nor Egypt for help, nor would they worship idols any more. There are things that all who come to God must give up. Their evil ways, evil habits and evil associates must be forsaken. The prayer contains an expression of faith in God. The prodigal son became awake to his wretched condition, determined to return to his father, forsaking his wanderings, and trusting that his father would give him a humble place in the home. Those who really "return to the Lord" pray.

Pardon. Observe God's willingness to forgive those who are penitent. The father and mother are ready to forgive their child who has been disobedient if that child is sorry for the wrong and desires forgiveness. The father was glad to receive the returning prodigal, and did vastly more for him than the son hoped for. When God pardons our sins he does not remember them against us. Explain what is meant by healing one's backslidings.

Prosperity. Select the various expressions in verses five to nine which represent the growth, beauty, strength, stability and fruitfulness of those who return unto the Lord, and apply them to present day Christian experience. Again refer to the prodigal son's reception by the father and all the favors that were shown him. There was joy in the father's heart, and there was joy in the heart of the son. Israel rejoiced when they returned to God. All are happy whose sins are pardoned. The highest success comes to those who have peace with God. As the tree withers when it is removed from the fertile, well-watered soil, so spiritual life goes out from the soul that is separated from God.

LESSON XI

HOME READINGS.—Mon., June 5.—Hezekiah's Passover.—2 Chron. 30:1-27. Tu.—The temple cleansed.—2 Chron. 29:1-19. Wed.—Worship resumed.—2 Chron. 29:20-30. Th.—Consecrating.—2 Chron. 29:31-36. Fr.—Tithes.—2 Chron. 31:1-10. Sat.—Service of the Lord.—2 Chron. 31:11-21. Su.—Josiah's Passover.—2 Chron. 35:1-19.

HEZEKIAH'S GREAT PASSOVER.—2 Chron. 30:1-27. Print 30:13-27.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 18-20)

SUPT.—13 And there assembled at Je-ru'sa-lem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great congregation.

School.—14 And they arose and took away the altars that were in Je-ru'sa-lem, and all the altars for incense took they away, and cast them into the brook Ki'dron.

15 Then they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the second month: and the priests and the Le'vites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought in the burnt offerings into the house of the Lord.

16 And they stood in their place after their manner, according to the law of Mo'ses the man of God: the priests sprinkled the blood, which they received of the hand of the Le'vites.

17 For there were many in the congregation that were not sanctified: therefore the Le'vites had the charge of the killing of the passovers for every one that was not clean, to sanctify them unto the Lord.

18 For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephra-im, and Ma-na'sseh, Is'sa-char, and Ze-bu'lun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written. But Hez-e-ki'ah prayed for them, saying, The good Lord pardon every one.

19 That prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary.

20 And the Lord hearkened to Hez-e-ki'ah, and healed the people.

21 And the children of Is'ra-el that were present at Je-ru'sa-lem, kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness: and the Le'vites and the priests praised the Lord day by day, singing with loud instruments unto the Lord.

22 And Hez-e-ki'ah spake comfortably unto all the Le'vites that taught the good knowledge of the Lord: and they did eat throughout the feast seven days, offering peace offerings, and making confession to the Lord God of their fathers.

23 And the whole assembly took counsel to keep other seven days: and they kept other seven days with gladness.

24 For Hez-e-ki'ah king of Ju'dah did give to the congregation a thousand bullocks and seven thousand sheep; and the princes gave to the congregation a thousand bullocks and ten thousand sheep: and a great number of priests sanctified themselves.

25 And all the congregation of Ju'dah, with the priests and the Le'vites, and all the congregation that came out of Is'ra-el, and the strangers that came out of the land of Is'ra-el, and that dwelt in Ju'dah, rejoiced.

26 So there was great joy in Je-ru'sa-lem: for since the time of Sol'o-mon the son of Da'vid king of Is'ra-el there was not like in Je-ru'sa-lem.

27 Then the priests the Le'vites arose and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy dwelling place, even unto heaven.

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13 And there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great assembly. 14 And they arose and took away the altars that were in Jerusalem, and all the altars for incense took they away, and cast them into the brook Kidron. 15 Then they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the second month: and the priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought burnt-offerings into the house of Jehovah. 16 And they stood in their place after their order, according to the law of Moses the man of God: the priests sprinkled the blood which they received of the hand of the Levites. 17 For there were many in the assembly that had not sanctified themselves: therefore the Levites had the charge of killing the passover for every one that was not clean, to sanctify them unto Jehovah. 18 For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it is written. For Hezekiah had prayed for them, saying, The good Jehovah pardon every one that setteth his heart to seek God, Jehovah, the God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. 19 And Jehovah hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people. 20 And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness: and the Levites and the priests praised Jehovah day by day, singing with loud instruments unto Jehovah. 21 And Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites that had good understanding in the service of Jehovah. So they did eat throughout the feast for the seven days, offering sacrifices of peace-offerings, and making confession to Jehovah, the God of their fathers.

23 And the whole assembly took counsel to keep other seven days; and they kept over seven days with gladness. 24 For Hezekiah king of Judah did give to the assembly for offerings a thousand bullocks and seven thousand sheep; and the princes gave to the assembly a thousand bullocks and ten thousand sheep: and a great number of priests sanctified themselves. 25 And all the assembly of Judah, with the priests and the Levites, and all the assembly that came out of Israel, and the sojourners that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt in Judah, rejoiced. 26 So there was great joy in Jerusalem; for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not like in Jerusalem. 27 Then the priests and Levites arose and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy habitation, even unto heaven.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. 1 Sam. 16:7.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—There is a blessing in serving God from the heart.

TOPIC.—A union revival.

OUTLINE.—I. The Passover proclaimed. II. Idolatry destroyed. III. The Passover celebrated. IV. A time of rejoicing.

TIME.—Hezekiah began to reign B. C. 726.

PLACES.—Jerusalem; all parts of Judah and Israel.

READ.—2 Chron. 29-31.

INTRODUCTION.—We resume the study of the kingdom of Judah. Uzziah was followed by his son Jotham, who was upon the whole a better man morally than his father. In Ahaz, the son of Jotham, we meet the worst of the kings of Judah. He brought in idolatry to an alarming extent, making "altars in every corner of Jerusalem" (2 Chron. 28:24), and "shut up the doors of the house of the Lord." So wicked was he that at his death his body was excluded from the sepulchers of the kings. The task before his son Hezekiah, as he entered upon his reign, was no small one, to undo the work of his father and bring about the great reformation that was needed. Although he was the son of a

wicked father, he brought into his administration a strength of moral character that suggests careful training at the hands of his mother. In the beginning of his reign he opened the door of the house of the Lord, had it thoroughly cleansed, and organized anew the worship of Jehovah. Hezekiah's character and work convince us that no man needs to be wicked because his circumstances are unfavorable to a righteous life.

COMMENTARY.—I. **THE PASSOVER PROCLAIMED** (vs. 1-12). The Passover was held in commemoration of the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt, where they had been in bondage. Through it they were reminded that upon the eventful night of their leaving Egypt, their own firstborn were preserved, while the firstborn of every Egyptian home was destroyed. The Passover also looked forward to the coming of Christ and to his sacrificial death. The feast should be held, according to the law, on the fourteenth day of Nisan, the first month of the religious year; but as the temple was not cleansed in time for that, and the priests had not purified themselves, as the law required, it was appointed a month later in accordance with a provision of the law recorded in Num. 9:10, 11. Hezekiah sent letters throughout his own kingdom and also to the tribes of the northern kingdom, strongly urging all to unite in the observance of the Passover. The invitation was generally spurned by the northern kingdom, but the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun and Issachar were represented. The people of Judah were eager to join in the great religious festival. The invitation sent out by the king was treated in much the same way as is the gospel invitation today,—by some with contempt and by others with the highest respect. Many of the people of Israel had already been carried into captivity by the Assyrians, but the nation did not fall until several years later.

II. **IDOLATRY DESTROYED** (vs. 13, 14). **13. feast of unleavened bread**—A name by which the Passover was often called, because no leaven, or yeast, was permitted to be used or even kept about the houses during the feast. It could be properly celebrated only in Jerusalem. All the males were required to attend this feast yearly (Deut. 16:16). **second month**—See preceding paragraph. **14. took away the altars**—This was an appropriate preparation for the great feast. Ahaz had filled Jerusalem with idol shrines, and they must be removed before there could be consistent worship offered to Jehovah. **cast them into the brook Kidron**—The altars were removed permanently.

III. **THE PASSOVER CELEBRATED** (vs. 15-24). **15. killed the passover**—For a description of the Passover lamb read Exod. 12:3-6. **were ashamed**—Because of their uncleanness and their lack of zeal for Jehovah's worship. The zeal of others, and the thought of their own tendency to idolatry, put them to the blush.—*Whedon*. **sanctified themselves**—Made themselves ceremonially clean. **brought in the burnt offerings**—Where the brazen altar stood. **16. the priests sprinkled the blood**—The blood of the victims, as they were slain, was caught in basins and passed to the priests who sprinkled it at the base of the altar. **received... of the Levites**—It was customary for the worshiper to slay his own victim, but, as the next verse tells us, many of the people were ceremonially unclean, hence the Levites slew the sacrifices. **18. many... had not cleansed themselves**—Many had come from the northern tribes who understood little about the worship of the true God, and were not ceremonially clean, hence were not qualified to eat the Passover.

Hezekiah prayed for them—These persons were measurably excusable for thus presenting themselves at the feast without having "cleansed themselves." "In this prayer of Hezekiah we note that loftier view of worship which discerns, in the pure desire of a humble heart, something better than bondage to the mere letter of the law."—*Whedon*. **20. healed the people**—Their uncleanness was thought of as a disease, and its removal as a healing.

21. kept the feast... seven days—This was in accordance with the law (Lev. 23:4-8). **with great gladness**—The prime reason for their gladness, was that they were acting in obedience to the divine command. They were also conscious of the divine favor. They were realizing the joy of true worship. **praised the Lord**—This was in strange contrast to the baneful effects of engaging in idolatrous worship. **22. spake comfortably**—Encouraged. **taught the good knowledge of the Lord**—"Had good understanding in the service of Jehovah."—*R. V.* **offering peace offerings**—See Lev. 3:1-7. **making confession**—Confession is ordinarily no easy task. Human nature shrinks from acknowledging wrong, yet where wrong exists the only way to find peace is to confess and make the wrong right as far as possible. The people in assembling to observe the Passover had placed themselves under the most gracious influences, and their hearts were being savingly affected. They made their confession directly to Jehovah.

23. to keep other seven days—The service of the Lord at his temple became a delight to this great body of worshippers. Although the legal extent of the feast was seven days, yet because of the fact that this service had been neglected many years, and because they found a rich blessing in its observance, they desired to prolong the period of worship. **24. Hezekiah... did give**—The king had been active in arranging to hold the Passover feast, and was liberal in his offerings.

IV. **A TIME OF REJOICING** (vs. 25-27). **25. all the congregation of Judah**—The believers in Jehovah who belonged to Judah. **came out of Israel**—Those worshippers of God in Israel who accepted the invitation of Hezekiah. **strangers—"Sojourners."**—*R. V.* Those, both in Israel and Judah, who though Gentiles, had accepted the Jewish faith and were worshippers of the true God. **rejoiced**—Six classes are enumerated in this verse and all were united in the rejoicing. The reformation was such as might well be the occasion of joy to those who loved God. **26. joy in Jerusalem**—There is always great joy where there is a genuine revival of religion. **since the time of Solomon**—At the dedication of the temple Solomon had held a feast fourteen days, and probably this was the first time since then that any feast had been continued fourteen days in Jerusalem. Neither had there been since Solomon's day a Passover at which so many of the tribes had been represented, and so much enthusiasm and general joy shown.—*Whedon*.

QUESTIONS.—What kings reigned in Judah after Uzziah and before Hezekiah? What was the religious condition of Judah when Hezekiah became king? What general call did he make? How was his call received? What was the feast of the Passover? How many tribes were represented in the assembly that observed the Passover? Why was the feast held in the second month instead of the first? How long did the feast continue? What was the feeling of the people during the Passover feast? In what respect did this feast differ from all others since the days of Solomon?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. We return to the study of the history of Judah. 2. A sketch of Jotham's life and character. 3. Ahaz, the most wicked of the kings of Judah. 4. The inspired estimate of the character of Hezekiah (2 Chron. 29: 2). 5. Joash had been active in repairing the temple, Ahaz had closed it, and Hezekiah opened and cleansed it, and restored religious worship.

II. THEME.—Joy in God's service.

III. A GREAT OPPORTUNITY.—1. Ahaz had brought in idolatry. 2. The temple worship had been abandoned. 3. Idolatrous shrines were patronized throughout the kingdom. 4. Apparently the cause of Jehovah had been defeated permanently. 5. The land had been overrun by the Assyrians, and Israel had gained a victory over Judah. 6. Conditions were such as would be likely to dishearten a weak ruler. 7. God still had his hand upon the affairs of Judah and there were loyal hearts in the nation.

IV. THE MAN OF THE HOUR.—1. He was the son of the wicked Ahaz. The example before him was far from elevating. 2. The possible influence of a pious mother. 3. Hezekiah was a man of faith. Note three occasions upon which he prayed. 4. He was a man of courage. A faint-hearted man would have quailed in the presence of the hosts of idol-worshippers. 5. He was a forceful man. It was no small undertaking to reform the religious life of a nation. 6. He was firm. No half-way measures would answer. 7. He was large-hearted. Note his invitation to the tribes of the northern kingdom.

V. A GREAT REFORMATION.—1. His first work was to open the house of the Lord. 2. The task of cleansing it. It doubtless had been polluted with idol-worship. 3. The restoration of religious worship. 4. The priests and Levites needed reforming. 5. The gathering together of seven of the twelve tribes. 6. A study of the Passover. (1) Its history. (2) A type of Christ. 7. The Passover in Hezekiah's time. (1) The date. (2) The participants. (3) The length of time. (4) The sacrifices. 8. The rejoicing. (1) Its cause. (2) Its extent. 9. The joy of true worship. 10. Hezekiah had attempted the apparently impossible but with God's help he succeeded. 11. We learn lessons of faith, of zeal, of devotion to God, and of the blessedness of service for God.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—A union revival.

I. Planned by a righteous ruler.

II. Conducted on scriptural methods.

III. Reestablished true standards of piety.

I. Planned by a righteous ruler. "The king had taken counsel." Hezekiah laid before his people the desolate state of religion as it existed among them. He brought before them the sad consequences which they had suffered because of their neglect of true religion, and the practise of idolatry. He declared to them his own full purpose and resolve to revive true religion, and to make it his business to promote it. He then urged his people to enter into the same covenant. A truly pious man will not be content with serving God in his closet. He will exert his influence to bring others also to a sense of their duty. To such a sudden and complete change of the policy on the throne we must recognize a dispensation of divine providence. Hezekiah was for Judah a gift of the Lord. Great as was the peril to which the kingdom

was exposed from external attack, great as was its moral unsoundness, Hezekiah saw that all its trouble was rooted in ungodliness. He believed it useless trying to mend a nation's fortunes without first mending its morals and religion. His way of uplifting the masses was by uplifting the leaders of the masses. He regarded delay as dangerous. There are some things which are best done quickly, both in individual and national life. "He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the Lord, and repaired them" (2 Chron. 29: 3). Hezekiah was not of the opinion that God puts men into office to be idle and enjoy the dignity of their position, but to serve him. He therefore acted promptly and himself engaged in the work. His reform was positive in its nature and thorough-going. To carry out such a reformation under the most unfavorable circumstances called for courageous faith and extraordinary energy. Hezekiah began with God and was prospered accordingly.

II. Conducted on scriptural methods.

"They established a decree.... to keep the passover.... at Jerusalem." Hezekiah believed that sinners have a season of grace afforded them, when the outer door of the mind and the inner door of the soul are both thrown open to the Lord. The great mercy of God was the groundwork of Hezekiah's argument by which he enforced repentance on the sinners' consciences. God was near the young king in the corrupt capital of Judah and enabled him to direct faithfully the people as they presented themselves at the Passover. Before they kept the feast "they arose and took away the altars." True revivals of religion have ever flourished in proportion to the measure in which faithful scriptural preaching has abounded. Hezekiah was anxious not only to root up, destroy and deny, but also to set up in the place of what was evil that which was right and good. While he believed that preparation of heart was of the greatest necessity in the worship of God, and that every defect needs cleansing and should be a matter of humiliation, though not a discouragement, he believed favorable opportunities to fix conviction upon the individual should be improved even though irregularities had to be admitted to do so. The greater includes the less. God gave peace to their consciences and healing to their souls, for they made penitent confession of their sins and infirmities, a thankful confession of God's mercies to them and a humble confession of their needs.

III. Reestablished true standards of piety. Hezekiah succeeded in uprooting ancient abuses because he was moved not merely by political or human considerations, but by sincere love to the Lord and zeal for his honor. He returned to the original ordinances of the Mosaic law, which prescribed not only one central sanctuary but also one central place of worship. He was thus the restorer of that central worship which was so important and indispensable for the unity of the people and kingdom.

T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

HEZEKIAH ACTED
WISELY.
RESTORED A LONG
NEGLECTED SERVICE.
INVITED ALL TO JOIN,
EVEN THEIR ESTRAN-
GED BRETHREN OF
ISRAEL.



HIS PROCLAMATION
WAS A MESSAGE OF
PEACE AND GOOD
WILL TO ALL.
THOSE WHO CAME
WERE BLESSED.
SO WITH THE
GOSPEL.

Practical Applications

Sanctification. "The priests had not sanctified themselves sufficiently" (v. 3). Cremer in his Greek lexicon says, "The root word is 'hagios,' the primary idea of which is, pure, clean, free from stain." Webster gives two definitions, "To set apart for a holy use," and, "To free from sin; to cleanse from moral corruption and pollution." When the word is applied to God or Christ the idea of cleansing or purification is excluded (Ezek. 36: 23; John 17: 19). Applied to the Sabbath (Gen. 2: 3), or the articles of the tabernacle (Exod. 40: 10, 11), it means that they were to be dedicated to holy use, and not used for secular purposes (Exod. 20: 8-11; Isa. 58: 13). We are sanctified by the truth; by the will of God; by the blood of Christ; by the Holy Ghost; and by faith. The truth is the conviction for sanctification (John 17: 17). The will of God is the source of sanctification (Heb. 10: 10; 1 Thess. 4: 3). The blood of Christ is the ground of sanctification (Heb. 13: 12). The Holy Spirit is the divine, omnipotent, effective agent in sanctification (Rom. 15: 16). The Holy Spirit is the personal witness to our sanctification (Heb. 10: 14, 15). Faith is the instrumental human means whereby we obtain an inheritance among them that are sanctified (Acts 15: 9; 26: 18; Gal. 3: 14). We yield ourselves unto God (Rom. 6: 13); yield our members servants to righteousness (Rom. 6: 19); present our bodies a living sacrifice (Rom. 12: 1, 2), and believe God does the work. We lay ourselves on the altar and believe God sanctifies the gift.

Self-surrender. "Yield yourselves unto the Lord" (v. 8). "Offer up spiritual sacrifices" (1 Pet. 2: 5). "Present" your body (Rom. 12: 1). Self-surrender is the secret of a happy life and the preparation for a useful one. It is a sacrifice for service. When the sons of Levi were consecrated to the service of the priesthood, they presented their bodies. Moses washed them (Lev. 8: 6; Acts 22: 16). Clothed them (Lev. 8: 7; Isa. 61: 10). Girded them (Lev. 8: 7; Eph. 6: 14; John 13: 4, 15). Put the breastplate on them (Lev. 8: 8; Eph. 6: 14). Mitered them (Lev. 8: 9). Touched the ear, hand and foot with blood (Lev. 8: 24). The ear consecrated to hear his word (Psa. 18: 44, margin); the hand to do his work (Neh. 4: 17); the feet to walk in his ways (1 John 1: 7). Moses did it all. They presented their bodies and he prepared them for service.

Submission. "Divers....humbled themselves" (v. 11). Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought to think (Rom. 12: 3). The holy life is a humble life. The diamond is not proud that it is no longer coal. The cloud does not boast that it is no longer slime. The consecrated Christian is not puffed up with an idea of his superiority. Whatever we have God gives it. "Every good gift....is from above" (James 1: 17). We deserve no credit for it nor attention on account of it. A gentleman said to a friend, "I seem to be held in little repute. Scarcely any one ever notices me in the church." The answer was, "My friend, set yourself down for nothing, and if any one takes you for something it will be so much clear gain. Count yourself as nothing apart from Christ while you say, 'I can do all things through Christ'" (Phil. 4: 13).

Sacred communion. "Keep the feast" (v. 13) by a "continuous participation in Christ's sacrificial life and death. Crucified and risen with him, we perpetuate the sacrifice in ourselves. Dying is breaking loose from the old; rising, laying hold on the new. Crucifixion is parting with the flesh; resurrection, union with the Spirit." A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—There is joy in true worship.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

HEZEKIAH THE GOOD KING

Opened }
Cleansed } **THE HOUSE OF GOD**
KEPT THE PASSOVER

Preliminary. Review briefly the lesson of last week, making prominent the thought that if we turn to the Lord in penitence and faith he will pardon and save us. As it has been several weeks since we left the study of the history of Judah, it will be well to refresh the minds of the children by repeating the story of Uzziah and the affliction that came upon him because of his sin. Follow this up by telling a little about Jotham, and the great wickedness of Ahaz in bringing in the worship of idols, in closing the house of God and in giving up his worship.

A good king. Remind the children that it is a great blessing to have God-fearing parents. Tell the difference between two homes, in one of which there is the family altar and in the other there is no prayer. Hezekiah's father was very wicked, but his mother was probably a pious, God-fearing woman. Encourage any who may tell you that their parents do not pray, by telling them that their prayers may bring their parents to Jesus. Teach the class what the Bible says about Hezekiah: "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord" (2 Chron. 29: 2).

He loved the house of God. Try to explain how the young man Hezekiah must have felt when his father abandoned the worship of God and shut up the temple. When he became king, about the first thing he did was to open the house of the Lord. The children can understand how it had been neglected when they know that it took the priests and Levites sixteen days to clean it and put it in order for worship. Here is an opportunity to teach the lesson of reverence for God's house. It is a place for worship, not for business nor for worldly pleasure. We should love the house of the Lord, and it should be kept in good repair and neat and clean. The Jewish temple was the place where God especially manifested his presence.

A great Passover. Tell the story of the first Passover. It will include the bondage of the children of Israel in Egypt, their sufferings and their deliverance, as well as that terrible night when there was a death in every Egyptian household, but life and gladness in every Israelitish home. Show how this feast, which should have been observed every year by all the tribes of Israel, had been neglected. Remind the children that it requires constant watchfulness to perform fully one's religious duties. The people of Judah and Israel had disobeyed God and neglected his worship, therefore great calamities had come upon them. Write a list of words expressive of Hezekiah's character in connection with keeping this great Passover, such as, devoted, earnest, prayerful, trustful, courageous, loving, liberal, and explain what things he did which showed these qualities. It was a great occasion because all classes were encouraged and happy.

LESSON XII

HOME READINGS.—Mon., June 12.—Downfall of Samaria.—2 Kings 17: 1-18. Tu.—Abaz' idolatry.—2 Kings 16: 1-4; 2 Chron. 28: 1-4. Wed.—Vain help.—2 Kings 16: 5-9. Th.—Powerless gods.—2 Kings 16: 10-20. Fr.—People brought in.—2 Kings 17: 19-41. Sat.—A sign to Ahaz.—Isa. 7: 1-25. Su.—Israel's captivity foretold.—Isa. 8: 1-22.

THE DOWNFALL OF SAMARIA.—2 Kings 17: 1-18. Print 17: 1-14.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verse 14)

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SUPT.—1 In the twelfth year of A'haz king of Ju'dah began Ho-she'a the son of E'lah to reign in Sa-mar'i-a over Is'ra-el nine years.

School.—2 And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, but not as the kings of Is'ra-el that were before him.

3 Against him came up Shal-man-e'ser king of As-syr'i-a; and Ho-she'a became his servant, and gave him presents.

4 And the king of As-syr'i-a found conspiracy in Ho-she'a; for he had sent messengers to So king of E'gypt, and brought no present to the king of As-syr'i-a, as he had done year by year; therefore the king of As-syr'i-a shut him up, and bound him in prison.

5 Then the king of As-syr'i-a came up throughout all the land, and went up to Sa-mar'i-a, and besieged it three years.

6 In the ninth year of Ho-she'a the king of As-syr'i-a took Sa-mar'i-a, and carried Is'ra-el away into As-syr'i-a, and placed them in Ha'lah and in Ha'bor by the river of Go'zan, and in the cities of the Medes.

7 For so it was, that the children of Is'ra-el had sinned against the Lord their God, which had brought them up out of the land of E'gypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of E'gypt, and had feared other gods.

8 And walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Is'ra-el, and of the kings of Is'ra-el, which they had made.

9 And the children of Is'ra-el did secretly those things that were not right against the Lord their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

10 And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree:

11 And there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the heathen whom the Lord carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the Lord to anger:

12 For they served idols, whereof the Lord had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing.

13 Yet the Lord testified against Is'ra-el, and against Ju'dah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets.

14 Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the Lord their God.

1 In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria over Israel, and reigned nine years. 2 And he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, yet not as the kings of Israel that were before him. 3 Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant, and brought him tribute. 4 And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea; for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year; therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison. 5 Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. 6 In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away unto Assyria, and placed them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

7 And it was so, because the children of Israel had sinned against Jehovah their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods, and walked in the statutes of the nations, whom Jehovah cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they made. 9 And the children of Israel did secretly things that were not right against Jehovah their God; and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fortified cities; 10 and they set them up pillars and Asherim upon every high hill, and under every green tree; 11 and there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the nations whom Jehovah carried away before them; and they wrought wicked things to provoke Jehovah to anger; 12 and they served idols, whereof Jehovah had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing. 13 Yet Jehovah testified unto Israel, and unto Judah, by every prophet, and every seer, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. 14 Notwithstanding, they would not hear, but hardened their neck, like to the neck of their fathers, who believed not in Jehovah their God.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. Prov. 29: 1.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—It is fatal to disregard the commandments of God.

TOPIC.—An historical review.

OUTLINE.—I. The reign of Hoshea. II. Israel taken into captivity. III. The cause of Israel's downfall.

TIME.—About B. C. 721, Israel was taken into captivity.

PLACE.—Samaria.

READ.—2 Kings 16, 17.

INTRODUCTION.—We now come to the close of the history of the kingdom of Israel. The kingdom which began in a rebellion ended in a complete overthrow and captivity by a heathen power. During the two hundred fifty years of Israel's national existence, from Jeroboam to Hoshea, nineteen kings had ruled. There were frequent changes in dynasties, the longest one be-

ing that of Jehu, which embraced five kings. Of each of the kings, except Shallum, who reigned but a few months, it is recorded, "He did evil in the sight of the Lord." A long line of prophets had brought messages from Jehovah to the nation, yet the people persisted in their evil course until further mercy was of no avail. Hoshea, during whose reign Samaria fell, was not the worst of Israel's kings, yet the cup of the nation's iniquity was full and destruction must follow. Instruction, promises, pleading and threatening had alike proved unavailing, and Hoshea and his kingdom together drop out of history. The ten tribes of Israel have never yet been satisfactorily accounted for.

COMMENTARY.—I. THE REIGN OF HOSHEA (vs. 1-4). 1. Hoshea.—The name is the same as that of the prophet Hosea, and the name by which Joshua was at first called, and means "salvation." Hoshea had conspired against Pekah, king of Israel, had slain him (2 Kings 15: 30), and probably after a few years' struggle secured the kingdom, nine years.—From B. C. 730 to B. C. 721. 2. did

....evil—As all his predecessors had done. **not as the kings....before him**—Perhaps he heeded the words uttered by the prophets, yet the kingdom was ripe for destruction and his moral superiority over former kings could not save the nation. **3. Shalmaneser**—The son of Tiglath-pileser and his successor. He made Israel tributary to Assyria. **4. found conspiracy in Hoshea**—The king of Israel made a final feeble effort to throw off the Assyrian yoke by making an alliance with So (or Shebek or Sabaco), which act brought the wrath of Assyria upon Israel. **bound him in prison**—It is very common with the Hebrew writers to record the results of an expedition before the details are told; and as verse six implies that Hoshea was king when Samaria was taken, and verse one declares that he reigned in Samaria nine years, we adopt the opinion that his imprisonment was subsequent to the capture of Samaria, and when he was no longer king.—*Whedon*.

II. ISRAEL TAKEN INTO CAPTIVITY (vs. 5, 6). **5. throughout all the land**—The king of Assyria was determined upon a thorough subjugation of Israel, and therefore went through the country subduing the towns and cities of less importance than Samaria. **besieged it three years**—The city must have been well fortified and well provisioned to be able to withstand the powerful Assyrian army for that length of time. **6. took Samaria**—It seems from the records that the city was not taken by the Assyrians during the reign of Shalmaneser, but in the beginning of the reign of Sargon, his successor.—*Cam. Bible*. **placed them in Halah**—On the Euphrates, in northern Mesopotamia, not far from Nineveh. **on the Habor, the river of Gozan (R. V.)**—The river Habor is now known as Khabour, which flows through Gaziantep, in the cities of the Medes—The captives were scattered, some being taken far east of Assyria to Media. "These deportations of a whole population, with their women and children, their wagons and flocks, are depicted on Sargon's series of tablets in his splendid palace at Khorsabad."—*Farrar*. Sargon's records show that he carried into captivity 27,280 persons.

III. THE CAUSE OF ISRAEL'S DOWNFALL (vs. 7-18). **7. for so it was, that**—"And it was so, because."—*R. V.* **Israel had sinned**—The cause of Israel's overthrow is stated briefly and pointedly. It was not because they were surrounded by enemies but because of their sin. If they had kept themselves from sin, God would have kept their enemies away. **out of....Egypt**—This was the beginning of the remarkable series of deliverances which God wrought for his people. **feared other gods**—A violation of the first commandment. **8. whom the Lord cast out**—The original inhabitants of Canaan were idolaters and they were driven out that the Israelites might occupy the land. **9. did secretly**—They covered their idolatrous worship under the pretense that it was the worship of the true God. **built....high places**—God had appointed Jerusalem as a place for worship, but the people followed the practise of the heathen about them and established shrines on the hills in large numbers. **from the tower....city**—Towers were erected in lonely places so that shepherds might protect their flocks. The expression means that they built high places everywhere, in lonely places as well as where there were many inhabitants. **10. images and groves**—The images were stone pillars set up as objects of worship. The groves were wooden images of a goddess. The worship performed here was most impure. **11. wrought wicked things**—The

people of Israel had a knowledge of the true God, hence they were the more culpable for giving themselves over to the abominable practises of the heathen about them. God had chosen them to be his peculiar people, but they chose to be like the nations from whom the Lord had separated them. **to anger**—This was not passionate anger, but indignation at sin. **12. they served idols**—The worship of the true God carried with it an observance of all the commandments and ordinances which he had given, while the worship of idols, as performed by the heathen and idolatrous Israel, gave loose rein to every evil tendency. It is but natural for idol-worshippers to attribute to their gods their own depraved tendencies; and, having gods whose characteristics are debasing, they can worship such gods with ceremonies that permit them to carry out the wicked purposes of their own hearts.

13. testified against Israel—The Lord sent messages repeatedly to this nation as well as to Judah in an effort to induce them to turn from their evil ways. They had the law, and therefore were not in utter darkness. **prophets....seers**—The two words while differing slightly in meaning came gradually to be applied to the same class of men. The seer is literally one who sees; the prophet (Nabi) is one who bubbles forth like a fountain, or the one who speaks, but they both see and speak under divine influence.—*III. Notes*. Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Hosea and Isaiah were among those who had warned the nations of Israel. **14. would not hear**—They were bent on pursuing their evil course and refused to listen to the words of entreaty and warning. One's responsibility is proportionate to the knowledge he has or has refused. **hardened their necks**—The figure is that of oxen that set their necks firmly to go in the direction they desire, not being turned by any efforts of the driver. Israel is frequently referred to as a stiff-necked people (Exod. 32:9; Deut. 10:16). **did not believe in the Lord**—This laid the foundation for all their sins. They did not believe God's prophets, but hardened to deceivers. **15-18. The people are charged with following after "vanity,"** which was understood to be "nothing," as the gods of the heathen are looked upon by worshippers of Jehovah. "They are nothing and can do nothing. Therefore to have regard unto them is of no avail, and their worshippers in consequence use prayer in vain to them."—*Cam. Bible*. In verses 16 and 17 there is a powerful arraignment of Israel's wickedness. They abandoned themselves to every idolatrous practise observed by the grossest heathenism. They sacrificed their children to the god Moloch. "They sold themselves to do evil," as did Ahab (1 Kings 21:25). For all this evil the Lord "removed them out of his sight;" that is, he permitted them to be taken from their own land into a strange country and separated them from the temple and all the sacred associations dear to God's people. The kingdom of Judah, composed of the tribe of Judah, and portions of other tribes and the Levites, remained in Palestine.

QUESTIONS.—Who was the king of Israel at this time? To what heathen nation was Israel tributary? To what king did Hoshea apply for help? Why did Shalmaneser invade Israel and besiege Samaria? How long did the siege continue? What is the date of the fall of Samaria? Where were the people of Israel taken? Of what sins were the people of Israel guilty? What is meant by "images" and "groves"? What opportunities had Israel for turning to God? What is the result of persistent rebellion against God?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. A review of the kingdom of Israel. (1) Its establishment through a secession. (2) Its duration. (3) Its character, temporally and morally. (4) The number and character of its kings. 2. Israel compared with Judah in character. 3. God's regard for moral character. 4. The divine forbearance. 5. The certainty of punishment to the wicked.

II. THEME.—The disastrous consequences of rebellion against God.

III. A NATION DESERVING PUNISHMENT.—1. The opportunities afforded the nation to be right. (1) God's merciful and powerful dealings in their deliverance from Egypt. (2) The commandments given, the expression of God's will. (3) The blessings constantly within their reach. (4) The messages brought to the people by the prophets. (5) The chastisements already inflicted because of their sin. 2. The chief charge against the nation was that of idolatry and its accompaniments. 3. The idols mentioned. (1) The golden calves. (2) Baal. (3) Asherim. (4) The hosts of heaven. (5) Moloch. 4. The places at which worship was performed. 5. The people were guilty of using enchantments and divination. They tried to pry into the future in order to impose upon the people. 6. They sold themselves to do evil.

IV. A NATION IN CAPTIVITY.—1. When the Israelites were in bondage God freed them and gave them a land of their own. 2. Later God caused them to be taken out of their own country and held in captivity in a strange land. 3. Assyria desired to oppress Israel, and God punished Israel by permitting Assyria to accomplish her own desire. 4. The time of Israel's captivity. 5. The steps in Samaria's downfall. 6. The place of Israel's captivity. 7. The result of this captivity. 8. The number of captives. 9. They sold themselves to do evil, and the purchase price was captivity.

V. IMPORTANT TRUTHS.—1. The way of success and the way of destruction lie within reach of every nation and every person. 2. To defy God is to invite destruction. 3. God is merciful and long-suffering, but sin can not go unpunished. 4. Sin is sometimes made attractive but it is none the less deadly. 5. The path of peace is the path of righteousness.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—An historical review.

I. Of a nation's opportunities.

II. Of a nation's degradation.

III. Of a nation's destruction.

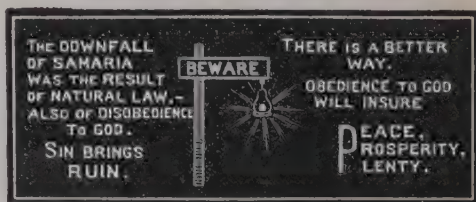
I. Of a nation's opportunities. "Out of the land of Egypt," God keeps an exact account of man's advantages as well as of his sins and his temptations. When the day of retribution arrives he will produce the whole account. Egypt, the very power out of whose hand God wonderfully rescued his people, Hoshea employed to help him against Assyria. God guarded the kingdom of Israel two hundred fifty years in patience and long-suffering. He warned, threatened, taught, chastened, and sent messengers to summon them to return. His anxiety to save them was very great. He anticipated their temptations by sending messages of warning and of guidance, but those who preached repentance were laughed to scorn or ill-treated and ignored. God's forbearance and mercy were very great. Whether men like it or not they can not escape God's claim upon them, yet if they fail to use their opportunities and privileges they will cer-

tainly be taken away. Calamity is never causeless. Israel was under covenant with God on the express condition of keeping his statutes, testimonies, commandments and judgments. A breach of their covenant with God was the special cause of their fall.

II. Of a nation's degradation. Upon Hoshea and his age there came down the corrupting influence of no less than eighteen princes, all of whom were steeped in wickedness. The whole nation had become completely immoral and idolatrous. Luxury, oppression, lewdness, drunkenness and idolatry prevailed. Hoshea and his people were not only inheritors of the corruptions of past generations, but they themselves became agents in propagating and perpetuating the wickedness. Hoshea began by making his way to the throne by conspiracy and murder. He trusted not in God but in an alliance with Egypt. He relied on treachery, double-dealing and on clever intrigue to get him out of his difficulties. He played a desperate game. He learned how vain it was to make covenants with the ungodly and to neglect the true God. His end was disgrace, misery and imprisonment. The source of all these evils is traced to Jeroboam's fatal step in setting up the two images of calves. His act had in it a principle which logically meant the overthrow of the theocracy. One step in the wrong direction carried many others in its train, the consequences of which stretched far beyond the results immediately seen. Israel began with neglecting Jehovah and finished with the frightful sacrifices of Moloch. Having once abandoned the center of divine worship they sank deeper and deeper into unbelief and superstition.

III. Of a nation's destruction. When neither judgment nor mercy were regarded and the cup of Israel's transgression was full God "cast them out of his sight." The ten tribes sinned themselves into slavery and everlasting obscurity. They sinned away liberty, property, country and national existence. Crime ruined their kingdom. The outcome of two hundred fifty years of idolatry was retribution, stern, vigorous and crushing. Corruption had reached its height which made a crisis inevitable. Man's folly and blindness brought sin's bitter fruit. They who forgot God were themselves forgotten. They who studied to be like the nations were buried among them. They who would not serve God in their own land were made to serve their enemies in a strange land. They were torn from their own land, exiled from home, forced to eat "unclean" things in Assyria, their national existence extinguished, ruled by heathen, separated from one another, all because when they knew God they would not glorify him as God, but gave his glory to dumb idols and defiled his land with their abominations and misused the gifts he had so richly bestowed upon them. Here is the beginning of the dispersion of Israel. Here is a solemn warning against the neglect of God-given opportunities. T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise



Practical Applications

Inconsistency. "The children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right" (v. 9). They covered their idolatry with a pretense of the worship of Jehovah. They kept the external rites, while their secret service was given to Baal. They called themselves by Jehovah's name and claimed to be his servants, in their deepest apostasy. Is your name on some church roll, and do you claim to belong to the people of God, and yet are secretly worshipping some idol?

Idolatry. "They set them up images" (v. 10). Contrast the gods they made and worshiped with the God who created them, whom they should have adored. Concerning idols David says, "They have mouths, but they speak not" (Psa. 115:5). Job declares, "God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we can not comprehend" (Job 37:5). "Eyes have they, but they see not" (Psa. 115:5). "The eyes of the Lord are in every place" (Prov. 15:3). "They have ears, but they hear not" (Psa. 115:6). The ears of the Lord are open unto the cries of the righteous.

Infidelity. "They... did not believe in the Lord their God" (v. 14). They doubted his righteousness, justice and truth. They did not believe that to serve God was everlasting gain, and to serve idols, everlasting loss. Have you questioned that God is the rewarder of them that seek him (Heb. 11:6)? Have you doubted the doctrine of eternal punishment? Are you believing man's lie instead of God's truth? Read the future from the past. If God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell; if he spared not the ancient world, but destroyed it by flood; if he turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes and made them an example unto those that should live ungodly (2 Pet. 2:4-6; Jude 7); if he sent his own chosen people into hopeless captivity, think not, unrepentant sinner, that he will spare you.

Indifference. "They would not hear, but hardened their necks" (v. 14). They refused to listen to his messages from prophet or seer (vs. 13, 14). They rejected the statutes and covenants of the Lord and accepted the statutes of the heathen and of their king (v. 15). They left all the commandments of the Lord (v. 16). Is there any portion of the word of God to which you do not bow reverently and absolutely? Are you following the traditions of men? Are you refusing to accept the exhortations and warnings of teacher and preacher?

Inhumanity. "They caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire" (v. 17). In one of the Society Islands after it became Christian six hundred children were assembled at a feast prepared for them. A missionary tells of the joy of those who had spared their children and of the grief of those whose little ones had been destroyed before the coming of the gospel. Bitter tears rolled down the cheeks of one venerable chief as he rose and exclaimed: "Let me speak; I must speak. Oh, that I had known that the gospel was coming! My children would have been happy among this group; but, alas! I destroyed them all." "I learned to drink wine at your table, father," a young man cried in anguish, as his soul went out into the darkness. A young girl lay in her coffin, robed in the rich white dress she had worn a few days before to a party. Her mother dropped on her knees beside the lifeless form and said, "I trained her to dance; I never trained her for eternity." Pleadingly she besought God to forgive her. Then she shrieked, "Too late! too late! how can I meet my daughter at the judgment!"

A. O. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—The ways of sin lead to destruction.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

ISRAEL'S	{ Opportunity sins Punishment
The merry } The justice }	
OF GOD	

Israel's opportunity. Inasmuch as we study to-day the close of Israel's history, it will be well to trace the rise of the nation, its progress during the period of the judges, the time of the single kingdom and the kingdom of the ten tribes. Call attention to the care which God exercised over the nation, describing two or three occasions when he brought supernatural deliverance. The Hebrews had advanced from an enslaved race in Egypt to be a great and powerful independent nation. Use a map to show the extent of Solomon's kingdom. The nation's opportunity was great because of God's special care, because of the law given on Sinai, because of the religious system established, and because of the many prophets sent to Israel.

Israel's sins. Do boys and girls do as nearly right as they know how? Some fail. Israel failed to keep the commands of God. Note the tendency to idolatry that manifested itself at Sinai when Aaron made the golden calf. Note the rebellion of the ten tribes and the establishment of the new kingdom. Note the idolatrous worship introduced by Jeroboam, and continued unceasingly until the nation was overthrown. Call attention to the fact that every one of the nineteen kings ruling in Israel from B. C. 975 to B. C. 721 was wicked. They were not all as bad as Ahab, but all were evil.

Israel's punishment. Israel's opportunity was great, and for that reason the sins of the kings and the people must be considered greater than if their opportunities had been less. The child that is only slightly disobedient is not as severely punished as the one who is persistently rebellious. Israel openly and defiantly sinned against God for centuries in spite of frequent warnings. There was no hope of the nation's reformation, hence the threatened destruction must follow. Explain how the Assyrians had attacked Israel at various times and the Lord had not permitted them to destroy his chosen people. At last God saw that the kingdom should be overthrown, so he did not restrain the Assyrians when they made their final attack upon Israel. Describe the long siege of Samaria, the capital, and the long march of the thousands of captives to Assyria and Media. The ten tribes became lost to history.

God's mercy and justice. Call attention to the remarkable display of God's mercy to Israel during the long period of the nation's sin. Tell how God bears with the sins of people and continues to show mercy, but at last his justice is shown in giving persistent rebels against his authority over to hardness of heart and to the certain destruction that awaits the unrepentant. It will not be difficult to recall instances of children who have set out to have their own way, disregarding the rules and wishes of teachers and parents, and who have found themselves at length outcasts from society or criminals.

LESSON XIII

HOME READINGS.—Mon., June 19.—Elisha and Naaman.—2 Kings 5: 1-27. Tu.—Joash repairs the temple.—2 Kings 11: 21-12: 16. Wed.—Uzziah humbled.—2 Chron. 26: 1-23. Th.—Isaiah's vision.—Isa. 6: 1-13. Fr.—Universal peace.—Mic. 4: 1-8. Sat.—Hezekiah's Passover.—2 Chron. 30: 1-27. Su.—Downfall of Samaria.—2 Kings 17: 1-18.

REVIEW.—Read *Psa. 37: 30-40.*

SUPT.—30 The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment.

School.—31 The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.

32 The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him.

33 The Lord will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.

34 Wait on the Lord, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.

35 I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree.

36 Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.

37 Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.

38 But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off.

39 But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord: he is their strength in the time of trouble.

40 And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.

SUPT.—What is the **GOLDEN TEXT**? **School.**—What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? **Mic. 6: 8.**

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—Devotion to God and faith in him are essential to moral and spiritual success.

TOPIC.—National decay.

INTRODUCTION.—The quarter opens with a study of the kingdom of Israel during the time of Elisha's prophetic ministry to that nation, and closes about one hundred seventy years later with the destruction of the kingdom. The nation's history shows one continuous decline from its inception in the revolt of the ten tribes and its organization into a kingdom under Jeroboam until it was taken into captivity, under the reign of Hoshea, by Sargon, king of Assyria. In Judah conditions were better, yet not ideal. There were periods in the history of the southern kingdom which showed a marked disposition on the part of king and subjects to acknowledge and serve the true God.

SUMMARY.—**Lesson I.** **Topic:** A twofold blessing. **Places:** Damascus; Samaria; the Jordan. The power of the God of Israel was manifested in a remarkable way in the healing of Naaman the Syrian of the leprosy. It was a strange providence which brought the knowledge of God to the afflicted man. As we read the entire account of Naaman's healing we are brought to feel that the hand of God is upon the affairs of individuals as well as of nations.

II. **Topic:** The prayers of a righteous man. **Places:** Dothan; Samaria. Three facts stand out prominently here: 1. God has a knowledge of future events, even though they are contingent upon the choices of men. 2. God can make his thought clear to men. 3. The Lord has marvelous ways of delivering his people. The Syrians should have put to a good use the knowledge of the true God received through the ministry of Elisha.

III. **Topic:** Victories of Easter day. **Place:** Jerusalem, near Calvary. The love that the followers of Jesus had for their Master is clearly seen in their visit to the tomb early on the third day after his crucifixion. We are impressed with the thought that Jesus reveals himself to those who earnestly desire to find him. Those who find Jesus have a desire to let others know about him.

IV. **Topic:** Difficulties in reform work. **Place:** Jerusalem. The boy Joash, remarkably preserved from death, had been placed on the throne of Judah, and instructed in the ways of the Lord by Jehoiada the priest, and it was in his heart to repair the house of the Lord. When, through the

slackness of the priests, the work was delayed, Joash interested the people to make contributions directly for this purpose with most satisfactory results. When one plan failed another was adopted, for Joash was determined to accomplish the work that he knew ought to be done.

V. **Topic:** God's purpose for all men. **Places:** The land of Israel; Nineveh. God's interest in the salvation of the heathen is shown in his sending a messenger to warn them of their danger. His mercy is shown in preserving them upon their hearty repentance. Man's selfishness and short-sightedness are seen in Jonah's attempt to shun duty, and in his displeasure at God's exhibition of love and mercy. Instead of rejoicing in the fact that God had counted him worthy to act as his messenger, he attempted to run away from duty, and instead of praising God because the Ninevites repented and were spared, he was displeased at the Lord's manifestation of mercy toward them.

VI. **Topic:** True piety and self-exaltation. **Place:** Jerusalem. Uzziah affords a striking example of how one can be humble and blessed, prospering greatly, and then, by allowing pride to enter his heart, can become an object of contempt. The king did much for his nation, and but for his act of sacrilege, his name would have been handed down as one of the most illustrious in Jewish history.

VII. **Topic:** Isaiah's threefold vision. **Place:** Jerusalem. Isaiah's vision is a lesson for God's people for all time. The needs of a world lying in wickedness are presented, as also God's interest in mankind in sending messengers to them offering salvation. The sight of God's holiness makes man conscious of his own impurity. When man has been purged of his sin he is ready to respond to God's call to service.

VIII. **Topic:** A nation's career. **Place:** Jerusalem. The lesson affords an impressive picture of God's efforts in behalf of his chosen people. This is done under the figure of a vine-dresser and his vineyard. All was done that was possible to make the vineyard productive but without success. The sins of Judah are set forth in two particulars: 1. They were inclined to covetousness. 2. They were given to drunkenness.

IX. **Topic:** Universal peace. **Place:** The kingdom of Judah. Micah's prophecy is directed more especially to the Jews, although Israel is also mentioned. He had a clear vision of the Messiah's kingdom. He uttered a prophecy of the restoration of the Jews from captivity. His utterances con-

cerning universal peace are strikingly significant in view of the world-wide interest now being taken in behalf of peace between all nations. Universal peace will reign when Christ, the Prince of Peace, shall hold full sway.

X. Topic: Timely admonitions. **Place:** The kingdom of Israel. Hosea presents a picture thoroughly in harmony with the gospel plan of salvation. An appeal is made to backslidden Israel to repent. The prayer indicates penitence, turning away from sin, consecration and faith. God's mercy and love are declared, and the blessedness of a state of salvation is revealed under a succession of striking figures. Men are given large encouragement that, though they may have departed from God, they may be received back into his favor. This is a gracious provision to meet the exigencies incident to human frailty.

XI. Topic: A union revival. **Places:** Jerusa-

lem; Judah and Israel. Hezekiah ranks among the best of Judah's kings. Although he had an ungodly father, he set himself to serve the Lord. His first important work was to open and cleanse the temple. Then he undertook to hold the Passover feast, which had been long neglected, inviting the people of both kingdoms to be present. It was an occasion of great rejoicing. The king was successful in destroying idolatry.

XII. Topic: An historical review. **Place:** Samaria. Although Hoshea was better than many of the kings of Israel, all of whom were wicked, the cup of the nation's iniquity was full, and the Lord permitted the powerful Assyrian nation to fulfil her long-cherished desire to swallow up Israel. God had for generations prevented hostile nations from destroying Israel, but idolatry had become too deeply fixed in Israel to be eradicated, and the people were carried away into captivity.

TABULAR VIEW

No.	SUBJECTS	GOLDEN TEXTS	PRACTICAL TRUTHS	OUTLINES
I.	Elisha Heals Naaman the Syrian. 2 Kings 5:1-27.	Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else. Isa. 45:22.	The way of humility and faith is the way of blessing.	I. Naaman's malady. II. A remedy suggested. III. The remedy sought. IV. The remedy effective. V. Gehazi's sin and punishment.
II.	Elisha's Heavenly Defenders. 2 Kings 6:8-23.	For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. Psa. 91:11.	God is near to comfort and defend his children.	I. Elisha aiding the king of Israel. II. Elisha in danger. III. Elisha defended. IV. The Syrian army captured.
III.	The Resurrection Morn—Easter Lesson. John 20:1-18.	The Lord is risen indeed. Luke 24:34.	The basis of our faith in Christianity is the resurrection of Christ.	I. The visit to the sepulcher. II. Jesus appears to Mary.
IV.	Joash Repairs the Temple. 2 Kings 11:21-12:16.	Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly. 1 Chron. 29:9.	The Lord's work should be of first importance with us.	I. Joash and Jehoiada. II. An attempt to repair the temple. III. The work completed.
V.	God's Pity for the Heathen—Foreign Missionary Lesson. Jonah 3:1-4:11.	Go ye therefore, and teach all nations. Matt. 28:19.	It is a duty and a privilege to carry the gospel to the heathen.	I. The prophet's mission. II. The message effective. III. The displeased prophet instructed.
VI.	Uzziah, King of Judah, Humbled. 2 Chron. 26:1-23.	Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. Prov. 16:18.	It is dangerous to let the heart become lifted up against God.	I. Uzziah made king. II. Uzziah's prosperity. III. Uzziah's pride. IV. Uzziah's humiliation.
VII.	Isaiah's Vision and Call to Service—Home Missionary Lesson. Isa. 6:1-13.	I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. Isa. 6:8.	Those who are freed from sin willingly respond to the divine call.	I. Isaiah's vision. II. The sense of sin and its reward. III. The call. IV. The commission.
VIII.	Song of the Vineyard—Temperance Lesson. Isa. 5:1-12.	Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink. Isa. 5:22.	We are thoroughly warned of the consequences of sin.	I. The parable of the vineyard. II. Warning against covetousness. III. Warning against intemperance.
IX.	Micah's Picture of Universal Peace—International Peace Lesson. Mic. 4:1-8.	Nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. Mic. 4:3.	The kingdom of Christ is one of peace.	I. The Messianic kingdom. II. A reign of peace. III. The restoration of the Jews.
X.	Israel's Penitence and God's Pardon. Hos. 14:1-9.	Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger. Neh. 9:17.	Repentance and faith are conditions of salvation.	I. The prophet's appeal. II. Israel's prayer. III. The Lord's promise. IV. Israel restored.
XI.	Hezekiah's Great Passover. 2 Chron. 30:1-27.	Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. 1 Sam. 16:7.	There is a blessing in serving God from the heart.	I. The Passover proclaimed. II. Idolatry destroyed. III. The Passover celebrated. IV. A time of rejoicing.
XII.	The Downfall of Samaria. 2 Kings 17:1-18.	He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. Prov. 29:1.	It is fatal to disregard the commands of God.	I. The reign of Hoshea. II. Israel taken into captivity. III. The cause of Israel's downfall.

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. The length of time covered by the quarter's lessons. From about B. C. 889 to B. C. 721. 2. The lessons include a consideration of both kingdoms. 3. We have both history and prophecy. 4. Comparative conditions in Judah and Israel. 5. We suggest a review by subjects rather than by individual lessons.

II. THEME.—The hand of God in history.

III. THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL.—1. Relations between Israel and Syria. 2. Naaman's cure. (1) The captive girl's suggestion. (2) The manner of the cure. (3) The results of the cure. 3. Samaria's deliverance and Elisha's triumph. 4. The continued decadence of the nation. 5. Idolatry the prevailing sin. 6. The cause of Israel's downfall. 7. Consider Hosea's call to Israel to repent. 8. The manner of the destruction of Israel. 9. The nation drops out of history.

IV. THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH.—1. King Joash. (1) His parentage. (2) Preservation from death. (3) Proclaimed king at the age of eight. (4) Instructed by Jehoiada. (5) The reforms accomplished by him. 2. A study of Uzziah. (1) The son of Amaziah. (2) Unfavorable condition of the nation at Uzziah's accession. (3) Uzziah's success. (4) Uzziah's pride. (5) Uzziah's humiliation. 3. Hezekiah's reign. (1) His parentage. (2) Destroying idolatry. (3) The great Passover. (4) The secret of his success.

V. SPECIAL LESSONS.—1. There are five special lessons in the quarter. 2. Easter lesson. (1) The earnest, active women. (2) The message of the angels. (3) The appearance of Jesus to Mary. (4) The good news scattered. 3. Foreign missionary work. (1) The needs of Nineveh. (2) The messenger sent. (3) The message delivered. (4) The effects of the mission. (5) My duty with respect to foreign missions. 4. Home missionary work. (1) The field. Our own neighborhood. Slum work. Great neglected regions in our own land. (2) The call for workers. (3) The equipment for service. 5. Temperance. (1) The setting of the lesson. (2) The outlook. (3) The duty of the church, the Sunday-school and the individual. (4) The place of prayer in the temperance cause. (5) The connection between greed and intemperance. (6) The weakness of arguments in support of the liquor traffic. 6. International peace. (1) Micah's prophecy. (2) Micah's words about peace. (3) A suggestion of arbitration. (4) Christianity promotes peace. (5) Jesus the Prince of Peace. (6) World movements in behalf of peace.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—National decay.

I. Touching both kingdoms.

II. Touching the prophecies.

I. Touching both kingdoms. Lessons one, two and twelve relate to the kingdom of Israel. Lesson one is a very touching illustration of how God sought to dwell in the midst of his apostate people and through them teach other nations to serve the living God. The king's fear at the approach of Naaman and his forgetfulness of the presence of God's prophet, Elisha, in Israel exhibit his lack of trust and reliance upon God and proves him unfaithful to the responsibilities of a king in Israel. The faith of the little captive girl shines forth as a beacon light revealing the love of God for all men and his guiding hand over the helpless lambs of his flock. Elisha's faithful handling of the leper case

illustrates God's power through consecrated instrumentality. Lesson two unfolds the true methods of dealing with the weak in faith and the sinner, to bring them to recognize God in his loving-kindness toward men. It pictures again the long-suffering forbearance God showed toward Israel in shielding them from their enemies. Elisha's prayer that his enemies might be powerless in their attempts to do evil shows God's way of shielding his own children from harm and his desire to save all men from the practise of sin. It is a challenge to God's people to conquer their enemies through prayer and by so doing overthrow the kingdom of darkness and build up the cause of righteousness in the earth. Lesson twelve brings before us the closing chapter in the history of Israel as a nation. It is a dark picture of continued sin against God, the beginning of which was the division of the twelve tribes of Israel, causing dissolution of the national unity, the revolt from the national covenant, and the overthrow of the law. The end was captivity and dispersion into heathen lands, never more to be a united people, religiously or nationally. During two hundred fifty years nineteen kings reigned and not a righteous one among them. Their hearts were set to do evil from the time of their revolt when Jeroboam set up the two calves and made separate places of worship. Lessons four, six and eleven relate to the kingdom of Judah. Lesson four shows how the ten tribes affected Judah though they maintained a separate kingdom. Sin crept in with its deadening effect. The kings of Judah were generally better than those of Israel. Different efforts of reform were not thorough and only temporary. Lesson six shows to what heights of prosperity God can bring a nation through a pious king. It also shows God's sure punishment of sin. Lesson eleven teaches the necessity of beginning at the inner life first in order to bring about a revival.

II. Touching the prophecies. Lessons five, seven, eight, nine and ten are taken from the prophecies and embrace the work of foreign and home missionary work, temperance and international peace. Lesson three, thrown in between, leads us to the triumphant resurrection of Christ to whom all the prophets looked and through whom all the glorious visions of their day were to be fulfilled. In lesson five is exhibited in the person of Jonah the exclusive spirit which hinders the upbuilding of God's kingdom in the earth and is shown to be directly contrary to God's plan for all nations and which must be set aside and overcome in every servant of God. Lesson seven presents a wide contrast in the attitude of Jonah and Isaiah. Isaiah got a view of God's holiness, his own depravity and the world's need. Lesson eight gives an idea of some of the messages which it became Isaiah's duty to declare. Lesson nine looks beyond the age of the Jewish decline and portrays the glorious triumph of Christ's kingdom. In lesson ten we have a tender appeal to Israel to come back to God. T. B. A.

Blackboard Exercise

<p>I. E. H. N. - S. II. E. H. D. III. T. R. M. IV. J. R. - T. V. G. P. - H. VI. U. K. - J. H.</p>	<p>REVIEW WHAT DO THE LORD REQUIRE OF THEE?</p>	<p>VII. I. V. - C. - S. VIII. S. - V. IX. M. P. - U. P. X. I. P. - G. P. XI. H. G. P. XII. T. D. - S.</p>
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Practical Applications

"Fear not" (2 Kings 6:16). This expression is used scores of times in the scriptures for the encouragement of God's people in all ages. Abraham heard it (Gen. 15:1), Moses spoke it (Exod. 14:13), Israel heard it (Isa. 43:1), Daniel heard it (Dan. 10:12), the shepherds heard it (Luke 2:10), the disciples heard it (Luke 12:32), Paul heard it (Acts 27:24), John heard it (Rev. 1:17). What the servant saw aroused only his fears, but what Elisha saw gave him the greatest confidence. Even though Elisha saw the great host of the enemy, he also saw the mountains traveling with horses and chariots of fire. "It is related that Oliver Cromwell's secretary was once despatched on important business to the continent. He was detained over night at a seaport town, and tossed upon his bed unable to rest. At last he woke his servant and said, 'I am greatly afraid something will go wrong with the embassy.' 'Master,' said the valet, 'did God rule the world before we were born?' 'Most assuredly.' 'Will he rule it after we are dead?' 'Certainly.' 'Then why not let him rule the present, too?' The secretary put the government on God's shoulders, and in a few minutes he was sleeping soundly."

"Here am I; send me" (Isa. 6:8). There is still a needy field either at home or in some foreign land, there is ability to labor, a call has sounded forth, but the responses are few. What is needed is not wider and more open fields, or greater ability or a louder call, but the touch of fire that will produce more responses and furnish the equipment for service. The field for us may be far away, or it may be at our doors, and possibly in our own homes. The ability we have may be small, but God can employ it, if we but respond from our hearts to the call. Our family may be saved with one exception. That one calls for our care and efforts. It is easy to find a field if the heart goes out in love to God and man, and it is easy to overlook every field if the heart is cold and indifferent. The field may be hard and seem altogether unfruitful, yet, with our efforts blessed of God, mighty results will follow. A minister once said, "Let me tell you, my brothers, that there have been men just as much set against religion as you are, and yet they surrendered to Christ. Do you know the story of John Bunyan, declaring that he would not go into the kingdom of God, with an oath so horrid that even the abandoned people in the street tried to hush him up, and yet, in a little while dreaming a dream of heaven so sweet that the mere recital of it has enchanted all Christendom?"

"And their voice was heard" (2 Chron. 30:27). "I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me" (Psa. 77:1). This is the voice of prayer. There can be no satisfactory Christian life without prayer. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles" (Psa. 34:6). In the great Passover celebrated in the days of Hezekiah the voice of thanksgiving was heard, as well as the voice of prayer. People who can talk with keen satisfaction of society, politics, business and a hundred other things never allow their voices to be heard in prayer or praise, and yet they desire to get to heaven and may even belong to a Christian church. A perfect submission to God joined with an active faith will bring about such a condition of things that the voice will be heard in praise and prayer. It is not an extraordinary thing to find persons who live in an atmosphere of prayer, and who are ready upon every occasion to honor the Lord in petition and testimony.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—The way of obedience is the way of blessing.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

JUDAH'S PROSPERITY

ISRAEL'S OVERTHROW

CALLS TO SERVICE

THE PROPHETS' APPEALS

A suggestion. Instead of following the twelve lessons through the regular order it might be well to group the quarter's work in some such form as is given in the above outline. Select as many persons or events from each group as can be well covered in the lesson hour and no more. Pass over them quickly, but make the application in each case. The Easter lesson stands alone, as it is not properly included in the above classification.

Judah's prosperity. Three names are prominent in this group of lessons, Joash, Uzziah and Hezekiah. Some of your class may be able to tell the story of these men. If they can, with a few suggestions from you, so much the better. Joash is an example of early piety, and his life and work show the influence of good training, for he was instructed by Jehoiada, and the excellence of respect for the house of the Lord. Uzziah brings to us the lesson that true prosperity comes from carefully following the Lord, while pride will surely bring trouble and sorrow. Hezekiah stands out prominently in his effort to stamp out idolatry from the land, and in the great Passover which he held.

Israel's overthrow. It will be well to tell the two stories of Elisha as given in the first two lessons, calling attention to the important work of the Jewish girl in captivity in declaring the power of the God of Israel, and to the way in which God delivered his people from their enemies. Refer briefly to the final siege of Samaria by the Assyrian army and the destruction of Israel. Their overthrow took place because they were persistent in their disregard of God's law as revealed to them.

Calls to service. In the two missionary lessons there are mentioned two needy fields, the one a foreign field and the other a home field. Give a short account of the needs of one foreign field of which you have heard or read. It was to a place something like that to which Jonah was sent. Describe some needy field in the home land where mission work is done or ought to be done. Next consider the call that Jonah received for the foreign field, and the one Isaiah received for the home field. Tell about a missionary in each class of whom you know. As God calls people to do mission work, so he qualifies them. Describe the preparation that Isaiah received, and call attention to his readiness to go when the call came. Some refuse as did Jonah and have great trouble. God grants success to his servants. What can the children do for the cause of missions.

The prophets' appeals. There are three lessons from the prophets, each of which has a distinctive purpose. Isaiah sounds a warning against the use of strong drink. Intemperance was wrong in his time, and it is wrong now. Impress the children with the thought that it is their duty to work for the overthrow of the liquor traffic.



DANIEL'S ANSWER TO THE KING

THE MISSION OF THE PROPHETS

God has not withdrawn himself from his people in any age. From the time of his call of Abraham to be the head of a nation peculiarly his own he made known from time to time his will concerning his chosen people. The great revelation of himself made to man through Moses formed a foundation upon which succeeding revelations were based. The people could not endure the appearance of God himself, hence he made known his will to man by using men as his messengers. "These messengers and interpreters of Jehovah bear the ordinary name of 'nabi,' derived from the verb 'naba,' to bubble forth, which finds its explanation in Exod. 4:1-17, where God says to Moses, 'Aaron shall be thy "nabi," i. e., speaker.' The prophetic office was not, like that of the priests, a prerogative of the tribe or family, but was to be in connection with the people of the covenant. Though the prophet was an immediate organ of Jehovah, yet he was to begin with Moses, and continue the revelation given to him, thus always keeping alive the communication between Jehovah and his people, in whose midst he dwells and moves, while the absence of prophecy was a sign that Jehovah had retired from his people." The prophet's office, then, was peculiar. He was directly called of God to perform a distinctive work. That call was so clear that he had no uncertainty as to his duty. Not only was the call unmistakably clear, but his relation to God was such that he could receive with exactness the messages given to him for his people. He spoke to the people in the place of God. The messages they received from the prophet were God's words to them.

Although the prophet was divinely called to perform a definite mission, and that mission was for the benefit of the people to whom he was sent, it not unfrequently occurred that the prophet's greatest difficulty arose from those whom God would help through him. Sometimes the prophet's message was a stern rebuke to a king, and the king, failing to recognize him as simply a servant of the Lord with no responsibility as to the nature of the message, persecuted the prophet, placing him in prison or even putting him to death, thinking that he might thus destroy the force of the message. The prophet was at times sent with a message to those who would give no heed to his words. Such a mission would be discouraging indeed to the prophet, if he did not realize that his only responsibility was to deliver the message faithfully and fully.

The great mission of the prophets was to direct the people in the right way. Messages were sent in reproof and warning. When king and people were going astray, the Lord did not leave them unrebuked. His love for them was too great to admit of his allowing them to go unwarned to their destruction. When Ahab was guilty of the grossest idolatry and of murderous covetousness, Jehovah had a rugged, faithful and fearless Elijah to rebuke him for his wickedness. That prophet came unannounced from apparent obscurity into the most prominent place in the kingdom of Israel in Ahab's time, and, having finished his work, was taken with lofty honors by a whirlwind into heaven. His work in Israel and his remarkable leave-taking proclaim the value of the man and his dignity. It was the privilege of the prophets at times to bring encouragement to the people. Isaiah was commissioned to declare to Hezekiah that the cruel boast of the proud Sennacherib would prove utterly empty, and his kingdom would be spared. While Isaiah foretold the destruction of many nations, his great mission was to encourage his nation by foretelling with remarkable clearness the blessings of the Messianic age. His vision was so clear that it is no wonder that he has been styled the evangelical prophet. The duty assigned to Jeremiah, while it was a lofty tribute to his integrity, was a test of his faith and courage. To be sent with a message of encouragement to a king to resist his enemies with the assurance of victory would not be a hardship, even if there should be in it a call to repentance and deep humiliation; but it is quite another thing to carry to a Jehoiakim a message to yield to the enemies of Judah that the lives of the people might be preserved. Jeremiah's faithfulness cost him suffering but brought him satisfaction.

LESSON I

HOME READINGS.—Mon., June 26.—Isaiah's prophecy.—Isa. 37: 14-38. Tu.—With us is Jehovah.—2 Chron. 32: 1-8. Wed.—Defiance of Sennacherib.—2 Chron. 32: 9-19. Th.—Boastful message.—Isa. 36: 1-20. Fr.—Hezekiah interceding.—Isa. 37: 1-7. Sat.—Final warning.—Isa. 37: 8-13. Su.—God hears Hezekiah's prayer.—Isa. 38: 1-22.

ISAIAH'S PROPHECY CONCERNING SENNACHERIB.—Isa. 37: 14-38. Print 37: 21-36.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 33-35)

SUPT.—21 Then I-sai'ah the son of A'moz sent unto Hez-e-ki'ah, saying, Thus saith the Lord God of Is'ra-el, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sen-nach'er-ib king of As-syr'i-a:

SCHOOL.—22 This is the word which the Lord hath spoken concerning him: The virgin, the daughter of Zi'on, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Je-ru'-sa-lem hath shaken her head at thee.

23 Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Is'ra-el.

24 By thy servants hast thou reproached the Lord, and hast said, By the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Leb'a-non; and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, and the choice fir trees thereof; and I will enter into the height of his border, and the forest of his Carmel.

25 I have digged, and drunk water; and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of the besieged places.

26 Hast thou not heard long ago, how I have done it; and of ancient times, that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste defenced cities into ruinous heaps.

27 Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded; they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the housetops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up.

28 But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me.

29 Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my look in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.

30 And this shall be a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat this year such as growth of it itself; and the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof.

31 And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Ju'dah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward:

32 For out of Je-ru'-sa-lem shall go forth a remnant, and they that shall escape out of mount Zi'on: the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this.

33 Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the king of As-syr'i-a, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it.

34 By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord.

35 For I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for my servant Da'vid's sake.

36 Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the As-syr'i-ans a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.

*AMERICAN REVISION

21 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, 22 this is the word which Jehovah hath spoken concerning him: The virgin daughter of Zion hath despised thee and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. 23 Whom hast thou defied and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the hol- one of Israel. 24 By thy servants hast thou defied the Lord, and hast said, With the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountain s, to the innermost parts of Lebanon; and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, and the choice fir-trees thereof; and I will enter into its farthest height, the forest of its fruitful field; 25 I have digged and drunk water, and with the sole of my feet will I dry up all the rivers of Egypt.

26 Hast thou not heard how I have done it long ago, and I ruled it of ancient times? now have I brought it to pass, that it should be thine to lay waste fortified cities into ruinous heaps. 27 Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded; they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the housetops, and as a field of grain before it is grown up. 28 But I know thy sitting down, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy raging against me. 29 Because of thy raging against me, and because of thine arrogance is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.

30 And this shall be the sign unto thee; ye shall eat this year that which growth of itself, and in the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof. 31 And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward. 32 For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and out of mount Zion they that shall escape. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this.

33 Therefore thus saith Jehovah concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, neither shall he come before it with shield, nor cast up a mound against it. 34 By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and he shall not come into this city, saith Jehovah. 35 For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

36 And the angel of Jehovah went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand; and when men arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? SCHOOL.—God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Psal. 46: 1.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—There is always virtue in true prayer.

TOPIC.—Impending calamity.

OUTLINE.—I. Hezekiah's prayer. II. The Lord's answer. III. Sennacherib's defeat.

TIME.—The chronology is not clear. By some the date is placed as early as B. C. 710, by others as

late as B. C. 698. B. C. 701 is the date generally favored.

PLACE.—The land of Judah.

PARALLEL ACCOUNTS.—2 Kings 19: 14-37; 2 Chron. 32: 9-23.

READ.—Isa. 36, 37.

INTRODUCTION.—At about the middle of Hezekiah's reign great trouble arose through the powerful

kingdom of Assyria. The kingdom of Israel had fallen a prey to Assyria and the latter nation bade fair to become the mistress of the world. At the death of Sargon, king of Assyria, several subject nations thought an opportunity was presenting itself to throw off the Assyrian yoke. Hezekiah took advantage of the occasion and withheld the tribute which he had been paying to Assyria. Sennacherib, who succeeded Sargon, at once undertook to subdue those nations which had revolted, and in the course of his campaign started for Egypt. On the way he subjugated forty-six cities of Judah and purposed to humble Jerusalem, the capital. Hezekiah undertook to secure relief from an assault by sending vast amounts of gold and silver to Sennacherib, believing that the Assyrian monarch would be satisfied if he should receive the tribute which Judah had withheld. Sennacherib accepted the tribute but did not refrain from his purpose to attack Jerusalem. He sent three of his chief officers with a large army to the city to induce Hezekiah to open the gates of Jerusalem to the Assyrian army, employing threats, and in other ways trying to intimidate the king of Judah and his people. Sennacherib was in great haste to reduce Jerusalem, because he heard that the king of Ethiopia was on his way to wage war against him, and he wished to conquer the Jewish capital and hasten forward to meet the Ethiopian army. Hezekiah made every effort possible to resist the Assyrian army, organizing his forces, strengthening his defenses and inspiring courage into the hearts of his people. Having done all that lay in his power he had recourse to prayer.

COMMENTARY.—I. HEZEKIAH'S PRAYER (vs. 14-20). The officers of Sennacherib failed in their attempt to induce Hezekiah to surrender, and a letter was sent to the king of Judah in which Sennacherib sought to frighten him into submission, by telling of the successes of the Assyrian army, and speaking slightly of the God of Israel. It was at this point that Hezekiah took Sennacherib's letter to the house of God and spread it before the Lord. In the prayer are adoration, confession of need, argument and petition. The king was jealous for the honor of the true God and could not bear to hear his name reproached. He acknowledged that the Assyrians had subdued other nations and had destroyed their gods, "the work of men's hands," and he prayed for deliverance that the kingdoms of the earth might know that the God of Israel was the true God.

II. THE LORD'S ANSWER (vs. 21-35). 21. Isaiah.—The great prophet to Judah. See the Introduction to the seventh lesson of the preceding quarter. **thus saith the Lord**—Through the prophet the Lord assured Hezekiah that his prayer was heard and would be answered. **22. concerning him—Sennacherib, the virgin, the daughter of Zion**—The unconquered capital of Judah, Jerusalem, laughed thee to scorn—As the Assyrian king had scorned and reproached Jerusalem, so that city scorned him. **23. against whom**—"The Holy One of Israel" was not to be classed with the gods of the heathen. **24. by the multitude of my chariots**—Sennacherib had boasted of his great army and of his success in conquering the nation of Israel. **Carmel**—Used here for fruitfulness. **25. I have digged, and drunk water**—In 2 Kings 19:24, it is "strange waters." I have marched into foreign lands where I had to dig wells for the supply of my armies; even the natural destitution of water there did not impede my march.—**J., F. & B. dried up all the rivers**—The rivers were no obstructions to the progress of his armies against his enemies.

26. hast thou not heard long ago—This and the three following verses form God's reply to Sennacherib, who had boasted of his strength and his great achievements. **I have done it**—The Assyrian had met with great success, but that success had come to him simply as the unconscious

agent in carrying out God's purpose. **27. of small power**—Because I so ordered it the people were of small power before thee.—**Whedon.** Sennacherib thought he of himself had achieved great victories, while, in fact, Jehovah had brought dismay and confusion to those whose territory he invaded, **as the grass, etc.**—A figure to show how quickly and easily God is able to make the strong weak. **28. I know thy abode, etc.**—God declared that he knew the entire course of Sennacherib's life, even to his "rage against" him. "All the acts of the Assyrian are under the strict surveillance of Jehovah, who will show his power over him by dragging him back, like a wild beast, to his place."—**Cam. Bible.** **29. thy rage**—Thy violence in carrying out thine own purposes. **tumult**—Arrogant self-confidence. **my hook in thy nose**—This is the figure of the nose-ring for leading unruly animals.

30. this shall be a sign—An assurance of the certainty of what had been promised. God's word is here directed to Hezekiah. **such as growth of itself, etc.**—Because of the invasion of the Assyrians the ground had remained untilled that year, and the season was then too far advanced to sow for a harvest for the coming year, but the year following the usual cultivation of the soil would be resumed, as the invaders would be entirely gone. **31. the remnant**—According to Sennacherib's own record upon what is known as "Sennacherib's Cylinder," he had taken into captivity from Judah 200,150 persons, so that it was literally a remnant that remained. **take root downward, and bear fruit upward**—A figure of stability, growth and fruitfulness. **32. the zeal of the Lord of hosts**—God's intense interest in Judah's welfare. **33. shall not come into this city**—His loud boasting was utterly vain. He would not even make an attack upon Jerusalem. **nor cast a bank against it**—No mounds would be constructed against the walls, from which the battering-rams and other instruments of war could be used. **34. by the same shall he return**—His route would lie near the sea forty miles west of Jerusalem. **35. I will defend**—As God had defended his people for centuries, as they turned to him, so according to his faithful promise to David he would continue to defend them.

III. SENNACHERIB'S DEFEAT (vs. 36-38). 36. the angel....smote—No information is given as to how the destruction of 185,000 men was accomplished. It may have been by a fierce storm or more likely by a deadly plague. It was sudden, for, "It came to pass that night" (2 Kings 19:35). **when they arose**—That is, the survivors. The Revised Version is better: "When men arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies." **37, 38.** The scripture records do not tell us how long Sennacherib lived after returning to Nineveh, but from inscriptions upon monuments it is found that he lived twenty years and carried on five campaigns, none of which were in Palestine.

QUESTIONS.—Who was Sennacherib? Who was king of Judah? When did Sennacherib invade Judah? What was the nature of the letter which the king of Assyria sent to Hezekiah? What did Hezekiah do with the letter? What message did Isaiah bear to the king of Judah? What mistake had the king of Assyria made? What did the Lord promise to do for Hezekiah and his people? What sign was given that it would come to pass? What calamity befell the Assyrian army? What fate did Sennacherib meet? How is Hezekiah an example for us?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. We have studied the kingdom of Israel in its beginning, traced its course and seen its ending. 2. The kingdom of Judah is to continue another century. 3. The present lesson is naturally connected with lesson eleven of last quarter. 4. There are three records of the chief facts of this lesson. See parallel accounts. 5. This lesson is an inspiration to earnest prayer and faith.

II. THEME.—Deliverance through prayer.

III. A NATION IN DISTRESS.—1. Assyria the source of Judah's distress. (1) Its power. (2) Location. (3) Ambition. 2. Assyria's invasion of Judah. Forty-six cities taken. 3. Hezekiah throwing off the Assyrian yoke, the immediate cause of Sennacherib's invasion. 4. The Assyrians' purpose to conquer Judah while on the way to subdue Egypt. 5. An army at the gates of Jerusalem. 6. Hezekiah's efforts to conciliate Sennacherib by sending him vast treasure. 7. The attempt of the Assyrians to induce Hezekiah to surrender without a siege. 8. The threats and taunts hurled at Judah. 9. Judah's condition weakened by previous losses.

IV. A KING AND A PROPHET AT PRAYER.—1. Hezekiah's previous work in opening and cleansing the house of the Lord, and reestablishing the religious services. 2. The place of prayer. The temple. 3. The spreading of Sennacherib's letter before the Lord is recorded. An example for us to lay our difficulties before our Father. 4. The prayer. (1) Adoration. (2) Confession of need. (3) A plea. (4) Petition. 5. Isaiah also at prayer.

V. AN ANSWER FROM GOD.—1. Isaiah's communication from the Lord to Hezekiah. 2. Brief yet comprehensive. 3. In what sense was Sennacherib a servant of God? 4. God's regard for Judah. 5. The promise and prophecy were definite. 6. The sign that deliverance was coming. 7. An encouragement to pray.

VI. AN ARMY DESTROYED.—1. Probably the main army, in a location not recorded. 2. The suddenness of the visitation. 3. The number slain. 4. The mystery of the destruction. 5. Mighty forces are powerless when working against God.

VII. A KINGDOM PRESERVED.—1. Hezekiah did all he could to preserve the kingdom and then prayed. 2. Deliverance came in an unexpected way. 3. The greatness of divine resources. 4. Egypt also spared.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Impending calamity.

I. Removed from Judah.

II. Visited upon Assyria.

I. Removed from Judah. Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah were in peril such as had never before befallen them. The destruction of the city was contemplated and seemed rapidly approaching. The greatest power on earth stood in hostility to the little kingdom of Judah, which was reduced to two small tribes. Its destruction seemed inevitable. Assyria stood at the summit of its power as a world-monarchy. Intoxicated with success Sennacherib counted that there was no power equal to him either in earth or heaven. He boasted that he had devoted all the conquered lands to destruction and had caused nations to perish. It was a trying position for Hezekiah. From a human standpoint there was little hope with his handful of men of rolling back the mighty tide of conquest. From early life Hezekiah's great aim had been to please the Lord, and his trust in God had made him the noblest king of Judah; but there came a day

of trouble, of deep distress and humiliation. It was a day of chastisement from God. The policy of relying on Egypt was Hezekiah's great mistake. This time of peril from the Assyrians was a time of trial and discipline. But the moment he realized his own helplessness, he realized the return of God's favor to him. Thus by leading him to feel his own weakness God brought Hezekiah to rely fully upon him for help. He threw himself in his utter weakness upon God's strength. He prayed. He sent a statement of the situation to the prophet. All this he did before receiving the letter from Sennacherib. Then he prayed again. Judah was in utter national helplessness and in a terrible national calamity. In spreading all their difficulties before the Lord Hezekiah evidenced his confidence in God's interest in the affairs of his suffering people. Prayer was his only key to unlock a door of escape. Prayer was his soul's best resort in a time of extremity. Distress and threatened danger exercised him in acceptable prayer. Sennacherib's letter was an echo of the speech of Rabshakeh. The voice of that king was raised in exultation at his prospective victory over the people of God. Hezekiah was not so much alarmed for his throne and his own glory as he was for the name of God, that it be not blasphemed. In the midst of all this Isaiah stood firm and unshaken. He proclaimed in the name of the Lord deliverance to Judah and destruction to the Assyrian army. A definite assurance was given that the city of Jerusalem would not be harmed. Faith triumphed beforehand over all the powers of the enemy.

II. Visited upon Assyria. God is merciful and gracious, but he will not be scorned or blasphemed. Vastly different from Sennacherib's view of himself was the view which God took of him. He brought to pass a complete reversal of Sennacherib's ideas and expectations, and made him a mere instrument for the execution of his purposes. In the midst of all calamities God preserves a faithful remnant for himself who shall worship him and spread abroad his name. Sennacherib and Rabshakeh stand in sharp contrast to Hezekiah and Isaiah. They relied on their own human power and might. They recognized nothing superior to themselves. They shrank from no means of gratifying their ambition for achievement. They insulted and scoffed at God until his judgment fell upon them. The Assyrian army perished without a battle. In a single night Judah was delivered out of the hand of its mighty enemy. Isaiah saw and plainly declared the hand of God in that event. This extraordinary calamity befell the Assyrian army by a dispensation of providence at a great crisis in the history of Judah. By it we are shown divine vengeance against sin. Sennacherib who had boasted of his great might in that he had smitten whole kingdoms and peoples, was made to retire in defeat, and later to suffer death at the hands of his own sons. Men's mistakes as to God do not alter the realities of their relation to him.

T. B. A.

Blackboard Exercise

SENNACHERIB
INSULTED GOD AND
HIS PEOPLE.

GOD HUMILIATED HIM
AND SAVED HIS
PEOPLE.

185,000 DEAD MEN.



THE WAY OF SIN
IS HARD.

DOES NOT PAY
TO RESIST GOD.

THE PRAYER OF
FAITH
WON THE DAY.

Practical Applications

"Hezekiah received the letter... and spread it before the Lord" (v. 14). "This is the right treatment for books, letters, editorials and paragraphs which antagonize the truth and slur holiness. Spread them before the Lord instead of before the people. Hezekiah's recourse to prayer is a rebuke to those whose first reliance is on knowledge, skill and ability in debate. Many who lay great store by their guns of logic or squibs of satire and think they have demolished the current infidelity seem oblivious to the fact that their own sons and others are being poisoned still by the evil they claim to have wiped out. Let us acquire facility in the holy art of spreading things before the Lord!" Prayer brings men to God. Prayer does not change the unchangeable One. Prayer puts us in a condition to prove God's promises and receive his gifts. Would you learn how to pray? 1. Have regular times for prayer (Psa. 55: 17; Dan. 6: 10). 2. Have a place of prayer (Matt. 6: 6). 3. Be sure you have no unforgiving spirit (Matt. 5: 23, 24). 4. Confess every known sin and take the blood to cover it (1 John 1: 7). 5. Ask for definite things. Talk over everything that interests or troubles you, with minute details to God, as a child to its father. Nothing that concerns you is foreign to him (Phil. 4: 6, 7). 6. Have faith in God, not faith in prayer (Mark 11: 23).

"Whereas thou hast prayed" (v. 21). The prayer of the upright is God's delight. He hears the prayer of the righteous (Prov. 15: 8, 29). Hezekiah lived so that God could hear. "A telegraphic operator who could sit by his instrument and rattle away by the hour, never sending a message nor getting an answer because the wires were disconnected, would be independent of thunder-storms, electric currents, induction and all which could interfere with his work; but if his instruments were connected with the wires he would need to exercise care to secure insulation, see that his batteries were in order, and attend to all the details necessary for the transmission of intelligence by electricity, or communication would be interrupted. So the man who is to have communication with God and present petitions which shall be accepted must see that his prayers be not hindered (1 Pet. 3: 7). He must keep communication open with heaven; walk in the fear of God; adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things; learn to heed the Holy Spirit's voice, remembering that we know not what we should pray for as we ought, except the Spirit help our infirmities; keep himself in the love of God, building up himself in the most holy faith, and praying always in the Holy Spirit (Jude 20, 21)."

"Then the angel of the Lord... smote" (v. 36). Hezekiah was a man of God. His victory was complete. All that the Lord had spoken came to pass. Jerusalem was defended, the besiegers did not come into it nor before it, but were destroyed before they could begin the siege (vs. 33-36). But God did not save Judah to starve them. Their land was more than ordinarily fruitful for the first year and also for the Sabbath year, when they could neither sow nor reap. They suffered no ill effects from the enemies wasting their country nor their being unable to attend to husbandry. The earth, as at the first, brought forth of itself (Gen. 1: 11) and they lived plentifully on spontaneous productions. The blessing of the Lord made them rich and their toil added nothing thereto (Prov. 10: 22, R. V., margin). Sennacherib returned to his own city in confusion because his confident boasting came to naught.

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—The Lord delivers his people in answer to prayer.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

A KING { In trouble At prayer Encouraged A Great Army Defeated

A king in trouble. Take the class over the early part of Hezekiah's reign, showing his devotion to God, his interest in the house of the Lord and his efforts to reform the nation. Use a map to locate Judah, Assyria and Egypt. Sennacherib wished to subdue Judah and Egypt, and had brought a vast army out of Assyria for that purpose. He had already overcome forty-six cities of Judah and nearly the whole kingdom excepting Jerusalem was in his power. Sennacherib's record states that the Assyrians had taken captive more than 200,000 of the people of Judah. Be prepared to give the conversation between the officers of Sennacherib and the officers of Hezekiah at the wall of Jerusalem, telling how the Assyrians scorned the God of Israel, and wished Hezekiah to surrender without resistance. The king of Judah would not submit, although he could not see any way to withstand the power of Assyria by his own efforts.

Hezekiah at prayer. Explain to the class the preparations the king had made to resist the enemy. While his forces were weak he had organized them the best he could, and did his best to withstand the threatened siege. When Satan assails us we must strongly resist him, and then follow Hezekiah's example. Call attention to the letter sent to the king of Judah by Sennacherib. Consider the three things Hezekiah did in his trouble. 1. He went to the house of God. 2. He spread out the letter before the Lord. He carried his trouble to him whom he was serving. 3. He prayed earnestly for help, that the God of Israel might be glorified among the nations of the earth. God knows our distresses and our needs, yet he delights to have us spread them before him. As illustrations, name two or three great generals or statesmen who have appealed to God in times of great national distress.

A king encouraged. Notice that Hezekiah was not the only one who prayed. Isaiah was the Lord's prophet and he, too, prayed for deliverance. Study the message that Isaiah brought to Hezekiah from the Lord. Note what the Lord said to Sennacherib, the boast that the Assyrian made, and the promise of Sennacherib's defeat. Call attention to the things that the Lord would do to the Assyrians, explaining the force of the figures, "hook" and "bridle." The Lord gave a sign for Judah's encouragement that he would do all that he had promised. Select three promises of good made to Judah in verses thirty-one to thirty-five and dwell briefly upon them.

The Assyrians overthrown. Recall the way in which the Lord delivered the Israelites from Pharaoh, the way Israel was delivered from the Midianites in Gideon's time and the way Elisha was delivered from the Syrian army. The Lord works in unexpected ways. He has unnumbered means to employ in behalf of his people.

LESSON II

HOME READINGS.—Mon., July 3.—Suffering servant.—Isa. 52:13-53:12. Tu.—Bruised reed.—Isa. 42:1-9. Wed.—“They shall not hunger nor thirst.”—Isa. 49:1-13. Th.—“I hid not my face.”—Isa. 50:4-11. Fr.—“Shall he not break.”—Matt. 12:15-21. Sat.—Shall never hunger.—John 6:22-35. Su.—The Father’s cup.—Matt. 26:34-46.

THE SUFFERING SERVANT OF JEHOVAH.—Isa. 52:13-53:12.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 53:4-6)

*AMERICAN REVISION

SUPT.—13 Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.

School.—14 As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:

15 So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and which they had not heard shall they consider.

1 Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

10 Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: for his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isa. 53:6.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—We may be saved from our sins through the atonement made by the suffering Christ.

TOPIC.—Prophetic view of redemption.

OUTLINE.—I. A prophecy of Christ. II. The rejected Christ. III. The suffering Christ. IV. The triumphant Christ.

TIME.—About B. C. 700.

PLACE.—Jerusalem, the home of Isaiah.

READ.—Isa. 42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-11.

INTRODUCTION.—To Isaiah more fully than to any other Old Testament prophet was given a vision of the

coming Messiah, his nature and his work. It is not altogether strange that the Jews misapprehended the character of the Son of God. In this and other prophecies concerning him there is such a mysterious blending of the lowly and the exalted, of the scorned and the glorified, of the down-trodden and the triumphant, and of the human and the divine, that the Jewish mind could scarcely conceive of all these qualities existing in one Person. Their desires helped them to their conception of the Messiah as an all-conquering King, disregarding those expressions which referred to his lowliness and his sufferings, yet in his character and work the vision of Isaiah had its complete fulfillment. The last three verses of the fifty-second chapter form with the fifty-third chapter a consistent whole. The division into chapters, which is comparatively modern, is at this point unfortunate.

COMMENTARY.—I. A PROPHECY OF CHRIST (vs. 13-15). The three closing verses of the fifty-third chapter introduce us to the Messiah and give a summary of what is more fully described in the following chapter. **13. my servant**—Jehovah is speaking and calls attention to his Servant, the Christ. **shall deal prudently**—Or, he shall act wisely. Coming from the bosom of Jehovah to redeem the race, he knows its condition and the means to recover it to himself.—*Whedon.* **exalted and extolled**—Through his work in behalf of a lost world he shall be “lifted up, and shall be very high.”—*R. V.* “God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name” (Phil. 2: 9). He is exalted by those who enthrone him in their hearts, living the life he makes possible for men. **14. like as many were astonished at thee** (*R. V.*)—The astonishment was to arise from his lowliness and his sufferings. **visage.... marred**—This with the remainder of the verse is parenthetical and explains why many were astonished. His visage was marred by the sorrow and the suffering he endured for man’s sins. **than the sons of men**—An intensified reiteration of the thought in the preceding clause. **15. so shall he sprinkle many nations**—As “many” were astonished by his humiliation and apparent degradation, so “many” shall be sprinkled or startled (*R. V.*), by his unparalleled work for the race. **kings shall shut their mouths at him**—In reverence and awe. See Job 29: 9; 40: 4. **shall they see.... shall they consider**—These expressions portray unexpected greatness and exaltation of the Messiah.

II. THE REJECTED CHRIST (vs. 1-3). **1. who hath believed our report**—The message concerning the Messiah brought from God through his prophet. The question implies that comparatively few believed it. **arm of the Lord revealed**—The arm of Jehovah indicates his might and here symbolizes the Messiah. “The Messiah is God’s arm, stretched out to destroy sin and save his people.”—*Peloubet.* **2. he**—The Messiah. **shall grow up**—The prophet saw the Messiah as he was to appear on the earth, the child Jesus, and used the figure of “a tender plant,” or sapling, to represent him. **a root out of a dry ground**—Christ was born of obscure and lowly parents, whose home was in a despised city and at a time when great spiritual darkness prevailed. The figure is that of a sprout springing from the roots of a tree whose trunk is already fallen. **no form nor comeliness**—His personal appearance was good, but there was no pomp or display. While he was upon earth there were comparatively few to accept him and accord him his merited position. **3. he is despised and rejected of men**—Two reasons may be given why he was despised. 1. His lowly position did not appeal to those who expected the Messiah as a powerful earthly king. 2. The principles of his kingdom were opposed to the sinful natures of men. **a man of sorrows**—He knew the meaning of physical and mental suffering.

III. THE SUFFERING CHRIST (vs. 4-9). **4. borne our griefs**—The meaning is that the consequences of sin fell upon him, the innocent, and that he bore his undeserved sufferings as a sacrifice on behalf of his people. This is the first of twelve distinct assertions, in this one chapter, of the vicarious character of the sufferings of the Servant.—*Cheyne.* **carried our sorrows**—Pains, the results of sin. **stricken, smitten.... afflicted**—Men looked upon Christ as bruised, crushed, affected with some severe malady, sent because of sin; yet not for his own sins, but for ours, he suffered. **5. the**

chastisement of our peace—The suffering essential to procure peace for us was borne by the Messiah. **with his stripes we are healed**—The scourging received at the hands of his enemies (Matt. 27: 26) was a part of the suffering by which the sinner is healed spiritually. **6. all we.... astray**—The prophet declares the need of an atonement. “Sheep without a shepherd that have lost their way, and that in a country where flocks are exposed to the ravages of wild beasts, are the very picture of helplessness.”—*Keith.* **his own way**—Independently of what God would indicate as the right way. **laid on him**—The Father has laid upon the Son the punishment due us all because of our iniquities. **7. oppressed**—The word indicates harsh and cruel treatment. **he was afflicted**—“Yet when he was afflicted he opened not his mouth.”—*R. V.*

8. by oppression and judgment he was taken (*R. V.*)—There was an entire disregard for justice in the trial of our Lord, although there was a show of legal proceedings. **his generation**—This is a very difficult clause and there are numerous opinions as to its probable meaning. “Meyer, Alford and others understand this as equivalent to, ‘Who can describe the wickedness of the men of this time?’ Others interpret it, ‘Who shall declare his posterity?’ that is, his spiritual children. Dr. Kay understands by his generation, his lifetime or his life. Mr. Urwick suggests that it includes (1) his origin, (2) his earthly life, (3) his everlasting reign in heaven.” **9. made his grave, etc.**—An enigma which only history could explain. Jesus was put to death with the wicked on the cross, and they thought to bury him in a criminal’s grave. They appointed his grave with the wicked, but by a striking providence the same authority gave permission to a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea, who provided him with an honorable burial in his own rock-hewn tomb (Matt. 27: 57-60).—*Peloubet.*

IV. THE TRIUMPHANT CHRIST (vs. 10-12). **10. pleased the Lord**—The death of Christ was no afterthought; yet Jehovah did not wish his Son pain or evil, neither did he in any sense approve the spirit or deeds of his murderers, but he saw that the salvation of a lost race could be reached in no other way. **his soul—His life, an offering**—“A guilt-offering.”—*R. V., margin.* As in verse 5 the divine Servant is represented as a sin-offering, his death being an expiation; so here he is described as a guilt-offering, his death being a satisfaction.—*Urwick.* **his seed**—“The true spiritual Israel of the future. Those who by his means are converted to the knowledge of Jehovah.” **in his hand**—Under his government or direction. **11. satisfied**—He shall see such blessed fruits resulting from his sufferings as amply to repay him for them.—*J. F. & B.* **12. with the great**—Among the great. Christ’s victories shall be very great. His kingdom shall rule among the nations. **divide the spoil**—“There shall flow to him and his kingdom the wealth, the strength, the numbers, that the strongest nations possess.”

QUESTIONS.—Who was Isaiah? When did he prophesy? Where? What was the time of this lesson? Of whom does the prophet speak in this lesson? What is meant by “arm of the Lord”? Why was Christ despised and rejected by men? To whom is Christ beautiful? Why was it necessary for Christ to give his life for us? Mention several expressions in the lesson which show that Christ’s sufferings were for us. Why did it please the Lord to bruise his Son? How was Christ rewarded for his sufferings? What attributes of Christ are presented in this lesson?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. A review of the moral and spiritual teachings of the preceding lesson. (1) The need of prayer. (2) The time and place for prayer. (3) The nature of prayer. (4) The efficacy of prayer. (5) Divine resources. 2. The rank of Isaiah as a prophet. 3. The gospel in prophecy.

II. THEME.—Christ's sacrificial death.

III. CHRIST, THE HOPE OF THE AGES.—1. Old Testament prophecies of the coming of Christ. A few references are added: Gen. 3:15; Deut. 18:15; Isa. 61:1; Jer. 23:5; Dan. 2:34; Mic. 5:2; Zech. 13:7; Mal. 3:1. 2. The world's need of a Savior. (1) In the time when he appeared. (2) In the present time. 3. The sense in which the Mosaic sacrifices pointed to Christ. 4. His character as set forth in verses 13-15. (1) Wisdom. (2) Exaltation. (3) Humiliation. (4) His unheard-of power. 5. The personal, divine Christ is the only hope of the world.

IV. CHRIST REJECTED.—1. The classes by whom he was rejected. 2. The grounds upon which he was rejected. (1) He did not conform to his rejecters' idea of beauty and strength. (2) They were not satisfied with his origin (v. 2; Matt. 13:55). (3) His sorrow and humility did not appeal to them. 3. The consequences of rejecting Christ.

V. CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS FOR US.—1. In the lesson note the statements made declaring the sufferings of Christ. 2. Christ's capability of suffering. 3. The extent of his sufferings. 4. The necessity that existed for Christ's sufferings. 5. Twelve times in the lesson his sufferings for us are mentioned. 6. His patience under suffering. Figures used. 7. The circumstances of his burial. 8. The Jewish conception of the Messiah King did not admit of suffering.

VI. CHRIST VICTORIOUS.—1. The sense in which the Father was pleased with the sufferings of the Son. 2. The prophecy of his resurrection. 3. The prosperity of the Messianic kingdom. 4. The extent to which the atonement is applicable. 5. Christ's triumph in the hearts of redeemed hosts. 6. His triumph as a conquering king dividing the spoil. 7. His triumph was possible only by the way of the cross.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Prophetic view of redemption.

I. Christ as he appeared to the Jews.

II. Christ as he suffered for all men.

III. Christ as an interceding Savior.

I. Christ as he appeared to the Jews. It is one of the wonders of divine love toward humanity that Isaiah was given this marvelous vision of the life and work of Christ at a time when the Jewish nation was reduced, the ten tribes having been scattered in captivity for some time, and Judah nearing the time of captivity. The beacon-light gleamed with hope for a perishing world. The "gospel of Isaiah" declares the circumstances of our Savior's humiliation and work so exactly that it seems more a history of his passion than a prophecy. Nothing can be more marked and striking than the contrast between the character of Christ and the general character of the Jewish nation. His humble birth, his unattractive position in society and the unfavored career through life were their astonishment, indignation and bitter disappointment. They were unwilling for truth to prevail over their prejudices and opinions. The humility of Christ

brought to view the intensity of their sin. The old plant refers to the house of David, the dry soil to the barren religious life of Israel and the tender plant to Christ. The root of such plants as grow in a dry ground is the most important part of their structure. The redemptive work of Christ was the most important event that could come to a sinful world. It was the love which Christ had for the world that made him sad while doing his work in the world. All earth's spiritual concerns rested upon him. His face was an index of his life and work. It told the story of his inner life. Men missed Christ's beauty through a spirit of contempt, disdain and scorn. Such a spirit sprang from a lack of understanding and a lack of love. No finite mind can conceive of the extent of Christ's sufferings. The sense of the world's guilt lay upon him. The great mystery of the atonement alone interprets his peculiar sorrow.

II. Christ as he suffered for all men. Man can not of himself explain the mystery of Christ's unequalled abasement and sorrow. His sufferings were of God's appointment. His sorrow was not that men injured him, but that they destroyed themselves. As the Son of God he was heaven's representative on earth. As the Son of man he was earth's representative to heaven. Over against man's transgressions, iniquities and wanderings are set Christ's wounds, bruises, chastisement and stripes. Terrible as sin is it has been dealt with. The stripes which fell upon his nobler inner nature when his soul was scourged for sin, are a universal remedy for all spiritual sicknesses. He came into the world to exhaust the penalties of the law and to endure its curse. The laying of man's sins on Christ implies the taking of them off from man. Christ's silence was due to his consciousness of a divine solution of the mystery of human guilt. His silence told of the utter degradation of the men before whom he stood. Our Lord was not only guiltless and defenseless but he came among his persecutors in love that the "arm of the Lord," the active, saving energy of the Most High might be revealed. Many and serious were the aspects of sin, yet God through the prophet let men know that the wanderings of earth are the care of heaven, and that there shall be a complete conquest of evil through the atonement of Christ.

III. Christ as an interceding Savior. "The travail of his soul," that profound and indescribable sympathy, that yearning pity for fallen men, that self-denying and soul-absorbing love for man, which led the eternal Son of God to surrender himself to humiliation and suffering, to empty himself and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, bespeak the worth of the human soul. The accomplishment of the most stupendous plan of God, the success of the gospel in winning the hearts of men to God, was realized in the travail of his soul. The salvation of man is the satisfaction of God in Christ. His was a completed work.

T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

THE MESSIAH'S SUFFERINGS FORETOLD.	HE WAS WOUNDED FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS.	HIS TRIUMPH IS FORETOLD. SHALL SPRINKLE MANY NATIONS. SHALL SEE OF THE TRAVAIL OF HIS SOUL AND SHALL BE SATISFIED.
DESPISED. REJECTED. SMITTEN. BRUISED.		

Practical Applications

"He is despised and rejected of men" (v. 3). He knew the sorrow of unrequited love. He came to his own and his own received him not. He left the company of those who loved and worshiped him and lived with those who reproached his goodness, refused his teaching, misunderstood his motive, maligned his character, accused him unjustly, mocked his misery and tortured him even to crucifixion. That thus they should requite his tender, disinterested love cut deeply into the heart of Jesus.

"And we hid as it were our faces from him" (v. 3). Moses as a babe was exceeding fair, a goodly child (Acts 7:20; Heb. 11:23, R. V.). David was of a beautiful countenance and goodly to look to (1 Sam. 16:12). Saul was a choice young man, "from his shoulders and upward higher than any of the people" (1 Sam. 9:2). But Jesus had no physical "beauty" that men "should desire him" (v. 2). He was not to be loved for the height of his stature or the beauty of his face or the gladness of his countenance, but for his acquaintance with grief. The world hid from him because his face was sorrowful, his manner serious, his life prayerful, his consecration perfect, his teaching spiritual and his walk with God. Men hide from him now when they will not listen to the story of the cross; when they will not believe it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul; when they will not have this man to rule over them.

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows" (v. 4). The crucified One suffered the most excruciating agony without the slightest mitigation or relief. No one ever suffered on a bed of sickness, no one ever suffered under any circumstances such pain as Jesus bore on the cross. He saw of the travail of his soul (v. 11). Oh, the laborious, long continued work of our Lord between Bethlehem and Calvary! His first recorded spoken word is, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). He closed his earthly labor with the declaration, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4).

"The chastisement of our peace was upon him" (v. 5). Dr. Pentecost was called to a dying woman. She was much distressed as she told him he had but two or three days to live and cried out, "Oh! I have not made my peace with God." "Well, I have come to tell you good news," said he, and opening the Bible he read this chapter, putting a little emphasis upon the words: "The chastisement of our peace was upon him." Then he said, "You have only to accept the pardon Christ has procured for you. Will you do it now?" A change came over her face. She forgot all about her visitor. She turned to the wall and said, "Oh, how good it is that the dear Son of God came into the world to make peace for me!" The evangelist slipped away and left her, but many a time afterward her words brought a thrill of joy to his own soul.

"He was oppressed, and... afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth" (v. 7). He did not complain to men of God's appointments. He did not complain to God of men's cruelties. When he was reviled, he reviled not again. When they arrested him, though he had all power at his disposal, he was quiet and unresisting as though utterly helpless. Let the memory of how Christ suffered and was silent keep you always loving and forgiving that under every provocation it may be said of you as it was of your Savior, "He opened not his mouth." Much of pain and perplexity comes as a result of attempted self-defense.

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—Christ died for us.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

THE { PROMISED
REJECTED
SUFFERING
TRIUMPHANT } MESSIAH

Review. Recall the trouble that Hezekiah had on account of the king of Assyria, and impress the lessons to be drawn from the praying of Hezekiah and Isaiah.

The Messiah promised. Remind the children that the Isaiah of the preceding lesson is the prophet who wrote the present lesson, which foretells the coming of Christ. He was not the only one to prophesy of Christ. Tell the story of man's fall and show how greatly the world needed a Savior. It might be profitable to relate the story of a ship that was disabled in a storm and was driven on the rocks not far from shore. The passengers and crew were helpless and expected soon to perish. They could not save themselves and it seemed that no one could bring help to them. At last a line was shot across the deck from a life-saving station and with the proper appliances all were rescued before the ship went to pieces.

The Messiah rejected. Describe the rejection of Christ by those whom he came to save, and give the reasons why they would not receive him. They thought he was too lowly, too weak and too lacking in beauty to be the Messiah. They rejected the only possible means of salvation. It is a disastrous thing to reject the Lord. The passengers and crew might have refused to entrust themselves to the life-saving appliance because it did not look strong and pleasing, or because it was not a very comfortable way to reach the shore. It would have been folly, and it would have meant death to them to refuse. There are multitudes of people to-day who are rejecting Jesus, and, by so doing, are in danger of eternal destruction.

The Messiah suffering. His sufferings are for us. During a plague in France many were dying. The physicians did not know the nature of the disease and could not cure it. They decided that the only way to secure the necessary information was for one of their number to enter the hospital and make a most thorough examination of the body of one who had died of the plague. A physician volunteered to do so. He arranged his business affairs and bade his family farewell, for he knew it meant death to him. He made the examination, discovered the nature of the malady and wrote the facts and died. The plague was stayed. He died for his fellow men. Select several expressions in the lesson that show that Christ suffered for us.

The Messiah triumphant. Although Jesus suffered much, and even death itself, he arose from the dead and is forever glorified. He does not save all, for some refuse his help, but all who receive him are saved. While Christ was on earth he was lowly and despised, but now he is exalted. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. He was put to death in company with two thieves, but he arose from the dead and is now at the right hand of the Father in glory. Do we receive him into our hearts? Do we show him that we appreciate what he has done for us?

LESSON III

HOME READINGS.—Mon., July 10.—Manasseh's penitence.—2 Chron. 33: 1-20. Tu.—Thou hast afflicted.—Psa. 119: 63-80. Wed.—Chasteneth.—Heb. 12: 1-13. Th.—Blessed.—Psa. 94: 1-23. Fr.—Jehovah reproveth.—Prov. 3: 1-12. Sat.—He woundeth and maketh whole.—Job 5: 17-27. Su.—As many as I love I reprove.—Rev. 3: 14-22.

MANASSEH'S WICKEDNESS AND PENITENCE.—2 Chron. 33: 1-20. Print 33: 1-13.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 12, 13)

SUPT.—1 Ma-nas's'eh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Je-ru'sa-lem:

School.—2 But did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Is'ra-el.

3 For he built again the high places which Heze-ki'ah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Ba'al-im, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.

4 Also he built altars in the house of the Lord, whereof the Lord had said, In Je-ru'sa-lem shall my name be for ever.

5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord.

6 And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hin'nom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger.

7 And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to Da'vid and to So-lo-mo-n his son, In this house, and in Je-ru'sa-lem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Is'ra-el, will I put my name for ever:

8 Neither will I any more remove the foot of Is'ra-el from out of the land which I have appointed for your fathers; so that they will take heed to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Mo'ses.

9 So Ma-nas's'eh made Ju'dah and the inhabitants of Je-ru'sa-lem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Is'ra-el.

10 And the Lord spake to Ma-nas's'eh, and to his people: but they would not hearken.

11 Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of As-syr'i-a, which took Ma-nas's'eh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Bab'y-lon.

12 And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers,

13 And prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Je-ru'sa-lem into his kingdom. Then Ma-nas's'eh knew that the Lord he was God.

*AMERICAN REVISION

1 Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign; and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem. 2 And he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, after the abominations of the nations whom Jehovah cast out before the children of Israel. 3 For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down; and he reared up altars for the Baalim, and made Asheroth, and wor-hipped all the host of heaven, and served them. 4 And he built altars in the house of Jehovah, whereof Jehovah said, In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever. 5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of Jehovah. 6 He also made his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom; and he practised augury, and used enchantments, and practised sorcery, and dealt with them that had familiar spirits, and with wizards; he wrought much evil in the sight of Jehovah, to provoke him to anger. 7 And he set the graven image of the idol, which he had made, in the house of God, of which God said to David and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever: 8 neither will I any more remove the foot of Israel from off the land which I have appointed for your fathers, if only they will observe to do all that I have commanded them, even all the law and the statutes, and the ordinances given by Moses. 9 And Manasseh seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that they did evil more than did the nations whom Jehovah destroyed before the children of Israel.

10 And Jehovah spake to Manasseh, and to his people; but they gave no heed. 11 Wherefore Jehovah brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh in chains, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. 12 And when he was in distress, he besought Jehovah his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. 13 And he prayed unto him; and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that Jehovah he was God.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—Cease to do evil; learn to do well. Isa. 1: 16, 17.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—There is pardon for those who truly repent.

TOPIC.—Reaction against religious reform.

OUTLINE.—I. Manasseh's wickedness. II. Manasseh's punishment. III. Manasseh's repentance.

TIME.—About B. C. 697 Manasseh began his reign of fifty-five years.

PLACES.—Jerusalem; Babylon.

PARALLEL ACCOUNT.—2 Kings 21: 1-18.

INTRODUCTION.—Hezekiah lived but a year or two after his remarkable deliverance from the Assyrian army. His reign was marked by a determined and measurably successful effort to destroy idolatry from his realm. He had been personally favored by the Lord in the prolongation of his life fifteen years in answer to prayer. Prayer, too, had availed in driving the Assyrians from Judah. The weak point in Hezekiah's administration was his exhibition of the sacred treasures

of the house of the Lord to the deputation that came from Babylon to congratulate him upon his remarkable recovery. Hezekiah stands in sacred history as one of the best kings that ever graced the throne of Judah. His successor, even though his son, was wholly unlike him. Superlatives meet in Manasseh. His reign was at once the longest and the worst in Judah's history. In him the high advantages of a godly parentage appeared to go for nothing; yet his subsequent repentance may have been in part the result of early training in an atmosphere of piety and faith.

COMMENTARY.—I. MANASSEH'S WICKEDNESS (vs. 1-10). 1. Manasseh.—The son of Hezekiah and Hephzibah. He was born three years after his father's extraordinary recovery from sickness. was twelve years old.—In Judah, as in England, a king was not supposed to be of age until he was eighteen. For six years Manasseh must have been to a great extent under the influence of his regents and counselors.—Farrar. 2. but did that which was evil.—It is probable that he

came under the influence of idolatrous and wicked men as he began to reign, and they led him to restore the idol worship which his father had striven to overthrow. **like unto the abominations of the heathen**—Inasmuch as he knew the true God and turned away from his worship to that of the heathen gods, his sin was greater than that of the heathen. **whom the Lord had cast out**—Reference is made to those heathen nations who occupied Canaan before the Lord gave it to the Israelites. **3. he built again the high places**—Hezekiah had labored diligently to undo the work of Ahaz, his father, and restore the worship of Jehovah, and now Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, engaged zealously and wickedly to undo the good work of his father and renew the worship of idols. **altars for Baalim**—Baal was the title of the supreme god of the Canaanites, who was worshiped in different places under somewhat different aspects; hence the plural, Baalim, here. The altars would be distributed through the country to suit the convenience of the people.—*Cam. Bible, groves*—Wooden images representing the degrading worship of Asherah. **all the host of heaven**—They also worshiped the sun, moon and stars.

4. built altars in the house of the Lord—His efforts to discredit and destroy the God of Israel were deliberate and determined. In introducing heathen worship into the temple he struck an impious blow at the sacredness of the worship of Jehovah, and to him and his followers there could be no sacredness in the religion of his father. **in Jerusalem shall my name be for ever**—See 2 Chron. 7:16. **5. in the two courts of the house of the Lord**—The court of the priests and the court of the people. **6. caused his children to pass through the fire**—He worshiped Moloch, the god of the Ammonites. It is believed that a part of this worship consisted in placing children in the arms of a brazen image of the god, while the image was made hot by fires burning within it, and thus sacrificing the children to the god. **Hinnom**—The valley was a ravine south and west of Jerusalem. **observed times**—By studying the stars and dreams the magicians professed to be able to decide whether times were favorable or otherwise.—*Ill. Notes. used enchantments*—In an effort to discover the future. **used witchcraft**—The Hebrew word is said to mean, "Make a magic brew of shredded herbs."—*Cam. Bible, familiar spirit*—See 1 Sam. 28:8. He had in his service those who pretended to call up the spirits. **wizards**—Any who pretend to disclose the future. **wrought much evil**—Manasseh rejected God and in so doing opened the way to the practise of all the sins peculiar to the heathen.

7. set a carved image... in the house of God—The place which was most sacred and most inspiring to the true son of Israel was polluted by the most degrading and licentious orgies of the heathen world. **of which God had said**—See 2 Sam. 7:13; 1 Kings 9:3; 2 Chron. 7:16. **8. neither will I... remove**—Reference is made to the promise in 2 Sam. 7:19. **so that they will take heed**—"If only they will observe to do."—*R. V.* **9. worse than the heathen**—Manasseh was king and wielded a powerful influence. His people followed him in evil-doing. His reign was long, and his efforts and example were uninterruptedly bad for more than forty years. Josephus says, "He barbarously slew all the righteous men that were among the Hebrews, nor would he spare the prophets, for he every day slew some of them." The nobles who took their part were thrown headlong from the rocky cliffs of Jerusalem (Psa.

141:6, 7).—*Stanley.* **10. the Lord spake**—By the prophets. Possibly Isaiah and Micah were among them. Tradition says that Manasseh caused Isaiah to be sawn asunder.

II. MANASSEH'S PUNISHMENT (v. 11). **11. the Lord brought upon them**—Judah was not wholly free from Assyrian domination, and the latter nation desired full submission on Judah's part. "The Lord brought" the king of Assyria against Manasseh in the sense that he withdrew his protection from Judah and permitted him to carry out his purpose. **among the thorns**—"In chains."—*R. V.* Assyrian kings sometimes thrust a hook into the nostrils of their captives, and so led them about. The practise is illustrated on many Assyrian reliefs in the British Museum.—*Cam. Bible, fetters*—Fetters of bronze on hands and feet. **to Babylon**—"It is a confirmation of the sacred history to remember that just at this time Babylon and not Nineveh was the seat of the Assyrian government. Esarhaddon, who mentioned Manasseh among his tributaries, was the only king of Assyria who held his court at Babylon."—*Spencer's Com.*

III. MANASSEH'S REPENTANCE (vs. 12-20). **12. besought the Lord**—"In the solitude of exile and imprisonment Manasseh had leisure for reflection. The calamities forced on him a review of his past life, convicting him that the miseries of his dethronement and captivity were owing to his awful and unprecedented apostasy from the God of his fathers." **humbled himself greatly**—"When the rod spake he heard it (Micah 6:9), who would not hear the word (v. 10). His prison proved more profitable than his palace had been. God sent him into a dungeon to repent, as he did David into the depths, and Jonah into the whale's belly, to pray." **13. he was intreated**—It is impossible that any sinner who desires to forsake sin and turn to God will be refused mercy, after the record of pardon from God to a man like Manasseh. Does this not explain why Manasseh was permitted to live the life he did? Would the Bible be the book it is, if sin were not personified by such characters, and grace personified in Jesus Christ to meet their need?—*Whittle, heard*—Though affliction drives us to God, he will not therefore reject us if we sincerely seek him, for afflictions are sent to bring us to him.—*Henry.* **brought him... to Jerusalem**—"When Manasseh is brought back to God and his duty, he shall soon be brought back to his kingdom. See how ready God is to accept and welcome returning sinners, and how swift to show mercy. Let not great sinners despair when Manasseh himself, on repentance, found favor with God; in him God showed forth long-suffering (1 Tim. 1:16; Isa. 1:18)."

14-20. That Manasseh's repentance was genuine is shown by the fact that God restored him to his kingdom and also by his subsequent acts. He fortified Jerusalem, he removed the idol from the temple, he destroyed the heathen altars, he repaired the altar of the Lord, he restored the worship of the true God, and attempted to lead Judah back to the Lord.

QUESTIONS.—Who was Manasseh? When and where did he live? Who was his father? What can you say of Manasseh's character? What heathen gods did he worship? How did he desecrate the temple? What is meant by passing through the fire? What was the valley of Hinnom? What is meant by observing times? How was Manasseh punished? When and where did he repent? Was his repentance thorough? How did the Lord show him favor?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. Trace the connection between this and the lesson of two weeks ago. 2. A review of the life and character of Hezekiah. 3. The condition of Judah at the time of Hezekiah's death. 4. Note the changes from good to bad and from bad to good in Judah's history. The causes of such changes. 5. Brief reference to the last lesson.

II. THEME.—Repentance and its fruits.

III. MANASSEH DOING WICKEDLY.—1. Manasseh's parentage. 2. His age upon ascending the throne. 3. Possible influences brought to bear upon him in the early part of his reign. 4. The contrast between his character and that of his father. 5. The specific ways in which he sinned. (1) The general charge is idolatry. (2) Heathen altars in the temple of Jehovah. (3) High places restored. (4) Sacrificing to Moloch. (5) Practised witchcraft. (6) Abominations connected with idolatrous worship. (7) Manasseh made Judah worse than heathen nations. (8) "Shed innocent blood very much" (2 Kings 21:16). 6. Hezekiah undid the evil works of his father, and Manasseh undid the good works of Hezekiah, his father.

IV. MANASSEH AFFLICTED.—1. God's regard for the conduct of men. 2. God's ways of causing men to consider the evil of their course. (1) Warning. (2) Punishment. 3. The sense in which the Assyrians were God's servants. 4. Manasseh deprived of his kingdom, made a prisoner, placed in chains, taken to an enemy's country. 5. The way to repentance prepared.

V. MANASSEH REPENTANT.—1. His great wickedness was powerfully impressed upon his heart. 2. He was brought to realize that he had deeply offended God. 3. He humbled himself before the Lord and not before the idols which he had been serving. 4. He prayed to God. 5. The genuineness of his repentance. 6. Repentance includes both a sorrow for sin and a turning away from it. 7. Manasseh's restoration to his kingdom a remarkable event in history.

VI. MANASSEH DOING RIGHTEOUSLY.—1. He became a man of prayer. 2. He removed the idols and their altars which he had placed in the temple. 3. He repaired the altar of the Lord, and restored the worship of the true God. 4. He led his people to serve the Lord. 5. He fortified Jerusalem and other cities of Judah. 6. The latter part of his long reign was pleasing to God.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Reaction against religious reforms.

I. Distinguished Manasseh's reign.

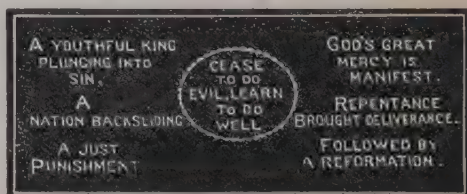
II. Encountered divine chastisement.

I. Distinguished Manasseh's reign. Manasseh reversed Hezekiah's entire religious policy, and returned to the wicked practises of his grandfather, Ahaz. His crimes were against God and his own native land. The nation had never before sunk so low religiously and morally as at that time. Under Manasseh's rule the kingdom became the very opposite of what, according to its original standard, it was intended to be. Manasseh's sins were committed in defiance of religious education and of the admonitions and example of his father. They were productive of more than ordinary evil to others. They were committed in defiance of the faithful warnings and pleadings of the prophets. During Manasseh's reign apostasy reached its

height. He made Jerusalem the place for collecting and practising all forms of idolatry. In Judah, the only remaining support of the true religion, there arose the most open and violent hostility to its most sacred principles on the part of the king himself. Manasseh bade defiance to Jehovah in his sacred sanctuary. He dedicated himself and his children to the service of false gods. Judah turned from the true God to the worship of senseless idols. Such a general and complete change, especially after the saving power of Jehovah had so lately been demonstrated for Judah against the Assyrian army, has no parallel in history. "There had been for a long time a party in Judah which sought support for the little kingdom from one of the two great world-monarchies of the time—either from Egypt or Assyria. The persons of rank and office and wealth, and influence especially, belonged to that party. They had adopted heathen notions and had fallen into immoral and licentious modes of life. Hezekiah had held that party in restraint and had been upheld by the prophet Isaiah. After the death of the pious king and the great prophet, the opposing party sought to control the policy of the nation. It was not difficult to ensnare the boy king as he appears to have been inclined to sensual enjoyments." The reign of Manasseh, to say the least, was the saddest period of Jewish history.

II. Encountered divine chastisement. In-sult to Jehovah could go no farther. The judgment of God, which must ever follow sin, at length overtook the wicked monarch. Such spiritual degradation, debased almost to the lowest point in morals, called for radical awakening. How far the wicked king or his people recognized the hand of God in the captivity of Manasseh, at the time of it, we do not know, but we see how in his extremity and calamity Manasseh learned to pray and return to God. This is the only record of a Jewish king beginning wrong and ending right. "It is often said of the penitent thief on the cross, that one such case is recorded in scripture that none may despair of repentance on a death-bed, and but one such, that none may presume." Manasseh's obedience was accompanied by the deepest self-renunciation and abasement to the end of his life. When permitted to return to his throne he made a different record for himself. He made a patriotic defense of his country. He destroyed the means of idolatry which he had introduced. He restored the services of true religion. He enforced reforms by command as well as by example. Yet that by which Manasseh was remembered was "his sin that he had sinned." It is a solemn and dreadful fact that no after-repentance can obliterate the effect of words spoken and deeds done while under the dominion of sin. The "sin of Manasseh," in which apostasy reached its culmination, became typical of Judah's sin, just as the "sin of Jeroboam who made Israel to sin" defined the curse of sin among the ten tribes. T.B.A.

Blackboard Exercise



Practical Applications

"He built again the high places....his father had broken down" (v. 3). He disregarded his father's teachings and dishonored his memory. In contempt of sacred things he "defied God to his face, impudently affronted him by putting his rivals right under his eye; he was not afraid of God's wrath nor ashamed of his own wickedness." He desecrated what had been consecrated. He turned God out of his own home and put rebels in possession. When faithful worshipers came to the temple they found to their grief false gods waiting to receive their offerings.

"Manasseh shed innocent blood very much" (2 Kings 21: 16). They were not criminals whom the wicked king put to death, but "innocent" persons who were martyred by public execution or private assassination to gratify Manasseh's ambition or revenge. Early ecclesiastical history says Isaiah was sawn asunder by Manasseh's order (Heb. 11: 37). "Out of the heart proceed....murders" (Matt. 15: 19). Hatred and anger are murder in God's reckoning (1 John 3: 15; Matt. 5: 22, R.V.). "Take heed...lest there be in any of you an evil heart" (Heb. 3: 12). Manasseh also seduced the people to do more evil than did the other nations (2 Kings 21: 9). The king forced them under penalty of death to follow false gods and live worse lives than the heathen.

"The Lord spake....but they would not hearken" (v. 10). "The Lord spake by his servants the prophets" (2 Kings 21: 10). He speaks now by the blood of Christ, the Holy Spirit, the written word, the means of grace, the invitations of friends, the example of holy lives. He calls from sin to holiness, from misery to happiness, from earth to heaven, from Satan to himself. A young man under deep conviction was earnestly entreated to accept the Savior. "If you refuse to accept Christ you deliberately reject him," he was told. This the unbeliever denied. Upon being assured that it was so, he deliberately replied, "Then I reject him." He put away the outstretched hand and persistently refused the only One who could save him. This is the crowning sin (Heb. 10: 26-29).

"And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God" (v. 12). The rod will not change a rebel to a child, but it will draw a true child closer to its father. "Do you run away when your father whips you?" one child asked another. "No," was the reply, "I run into his arms; he can't whip me then." In times of adversity we need specially to heed the command, "Keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jude 21). For all chastening is to draw us nearer to God; to make us more like God; to fit and prepare us for the presence of God. That accomplished, one has no need to dread rebuke or chastening. The closer and harder he leans on his Father's breast the less he will feel the rod.

"Humbled himself greatly" (v. 12). The way up is down. God never empties except to fill. He never makes poor except to enrich. He never humbles except to exalt (Matt. 5: 3-5). Assyria's iron fetters were more profitable to Manasseh than gold; his prison was better than the palace; his cross better than his crown; Babylon a better school than Jerusalem. God permits Satan to wound us that he may heal us. Manasseh might have said with the psalmist, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word" (Psa. 119: 67). Trouble should drive to prayer and prayer bring to God and the right. God does not afflict willingly (Lam. 3: 33), but "in faithfulness" (Psa. 119: 75), "for our profit" (Heb. 12: 10).

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—God forgives the repenting sinner.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

MANASSEH { Wicked
Punished
Penitent

FRUITS OF REPENTANCE

Review exercise. Tell your class you will let them have one minute to think of something that they can recall about the lesson of last Sunday. When the minute is past let each child tell one thing. After all have had an opportunity to speak, repeat in proper order what has been said, making as connected an account as possible. If any important point has been omitted the children may be able to detect and supply it. The blackboard may be used profitably to make a brief outline of the statements given by the class.

Manasseh, a wicked king. Give an account of Manasseh's father, his goodness and the good work he did in Judah. The youthfulness of the boy when he became king will be of great interest to the children. Refer briefly to Samuel and Joash. It is reasonable to suppose that the young king fell in with wicked counselors, who influenced him to do wrong. This opens the way for an impressive lesson upon the serious results of evil companionships. Note the fact that Manasseh so far disgraced the memory of his father as to destroy the good work that he did during his reign. A lesson is suggested upon respect for parents. Make a list of four or more wicked things that Manasseh did.

A king punished. God punished Manasseh. Describe the agency employed in this punishment and the manner of the chastisement. You have seen pictures of ancient captives being led with fetters upon hands and feet, and even with rings through the lips or nose. The king lost his throne, was made a prisoner and taken to Babylon, all because he was a wicked man. Sin is punished in the future world, and to a considerable extent in this life. Those who sin wickedly lose their character and usually their reputation.

Manasseh penitent. Dwell upon the mercy of God in making people know and realize their sinful condition. Manasseh had been having his own way, paying no heed to the law of God. As a prisoner he felt his sinful state and was led to humble himself and pray to God. He was far better off a captive in Babylon, repenting of his sins, than a king on the throne of Judah, serving Satan. Here is a lesson for all. If one has done wrong, the only way to make it right is to confess the wrong, stop doing it, and ask for forgiveness. Note that Manasseh was restored to his kingdom after he had learned his lesson. Repentance is more than sorrow. It means turning away from sin.

Fruits of repentance. Make a list of six things that Manasseh did after his return to Jerusalem, showing that he had truly repented of his evil life. A wicked boy sought the Lord and found him. He had taken some money from a gentleman some time previously. The boy went to him, told him what he had done, paid back the stolen money and asked forgiveness. Use questions to bring out the things that show that one has truly repented.

LESSON IV

HOME READINGS.—Mon., July 17.—Josiah's devotion.—2 Chron. 34:1-13. Tu.—Devotion of Asa.—2 Chron. 14:1-15. Wed.—Devotion of Jehoshaphat.—2 Chron. 17:1-13. Th.—Ezekiah.—2 Chron. 29:1-11. Fr.—Devotion of Daniel.—Dan. 1:1-21. Sat.—Three Israelites.—Dan. 3:1-30. Su.—Devotion of Nehemiah.—Neh. 1:1-2:20.

JOSIAH'S DEVOTION TO GOD.—2 Chron. 34:1-13.**AUTHORIZED VERSION****(Memory Verses 1, 2)**

SUPT.—1 Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Je-ru'-sa-lem one and thirty years.

School.—2 And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the ways of Da'vid his father, and declined neither to the right hand, nor to the left.

3 For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of Da'vid his father: and in the twelfth year he began to purge Ju'dah and Je-ru'-sa-lem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images.

4 And they brake down the altars of Ba'a-lim in his presence; and the images, that were on high above them, he cut down; and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of them, and strowed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them.

5 And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and cleansed Ju'dah and Je-ru'-sa-lem.

6 And so did he in the cities of Ma-nas'seh, and E'phra-im, and Sim'e-on, even unto Naph'ta-li, with their mattocks round about.

7 And when he had broken down the altars and the groves, and had beaten the graven images into powder, and cut down all the idols throughout all the land of Is'ra-el, he returned to Je-ru'-sa-lem.

8 Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land, and the house, he sent Sha'phan the son of Aza-li'ah, and Ma-a-sei'ah the governor of the city, and Jo'ah the son of Jo'ah-az the recorder, to repair the house of the Lord his God.

9 And when they came to Hil-ki'ah the high priest, they delivered the money that was brought into the house of God, which the Le'vites that kept the doors had gathered of the hand of Ma-nas'seh and E'phra-im, and of all the remnant of Is'ra-el, and of all Ju'dah and Ben'ja-min; and they returned to Je-ru'-sa-lem.

10 And they put it in the hand of the workmen that had the oversight of the house of the Lord, and they gave it to the workmen that wrought in the house of the Lord, to repair and amend the house:

11 Even to the artificers and builders gave they it, to buy hewn stone, and timber for couplings, and to floor the houses which the kings of Ju'dah had destroyed.

12 And the men did the work faithfully; and the overseers of them were Ja'hath and O-ba-di'ah, the Le'vites, of the sons of Me-rari; and Zech-a-ri'ah and Meshul-lam, of the sons of the Ko'hath-ites, to set it forward; and other of the Le'vites, all that could skill of instruments of musick.

13 Also they were over the bearers of burdens, and were overseers of all that wrought the work in any manner of service: and of the Le'vites there were scribes, and officers, and porters.

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***AMERICAN REVISION**

1 Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign; and he reigned thirty and one years in Jerusalem. 2 And he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, and walked in the ways of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left. 3 For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the Asherim, and the graven images, and the molten images. 4 And they brake down the altars of the Baalim in his presence; and the sun-images that were on high above them he hewed down; and the Asherim, and the graven images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of them, and strewed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them. 5 And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and purged Judah and Jerusalem. 6 And so did he in the cities of Manasseh and Ephraim and Simeon, even unto Naphtali, in their ruins round about. 7 And he brake down the altars, and beat the Asherim and the graven images into powder, and hewed down all the sun-images throughout all the land of Israel, and returned to Jerusalem. 8 Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of Jehovah his God. 9 And they came to Hilkiah the high priest, and delivered the money that was brought into the house of God, which the Levites, the keepers of the threshold, had gathered of the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel, and of all Judah and Benjamin, and of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 10 And they delivered it into the hand of the workmen that had the oversight of the house of Jehovah; and the workmen that wrought in the house of Jehovah gave it to mend and repair the house: 11 even to the carpenters and to the builders gave they it, to buy hewn stone, and timber for couplings, and to make beams for the houses which the kings of Judah had destroyed. 12 And the men did the work faithfully; and the overseers of them were Jahath and Obadiah, the Levites of the sons of Merari; and Zechariah and Meshullam, of the sons of the Kohathites, to set it forward; and others of the Levites, all that were skilful with instruments of music. 13 Also they were over the bearers of burdens, and set forward all that did the work in every manner of service; and of the Levites there were scribes, and officers, and porters.

SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? **School.**—Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth. Eccl. 12:1.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—To serve the Lord from youth is the highest wisdom.

TOPIC.—Independence of Christian character.

OUTLINE.—I. Josiah's moral excellence. II. Destroying idolatry. III. Repairing the temple.

TIME.—Josiah's reign was from B. C. 640 to B. C. 608.

PLACES.—Jerusalem; Judah and portions of what had been Israel.

PARALLEL ACCOUNT.—2 Kings 22:1-7.

READ.—2 Kings 22.

INTRODUCTION.—Manasseh's reign of fifty-five years was followed by that of his wicked son Amon, who was slain by conspirators after having occupied the throne for two years. Amon followed the example which his father set in the first part of his reign rather than in the last, and of him it is said, "He forsook the Lord God of his fathers, and walked not in the way of the Lord" (2 Kings 21:22). Manasseh's efforts at reform in the latter part of his reign were only partially successful, and the ground which he had gained was soon lost after Amon took the reins of government.

COMMENTARY.—I. **JOSIAH'S MORAL EXCELLENCE** (vs. 1, 2). 1. **Josiah**—He was the son of

Amon and Jedidah. His name means, "Jehovah supports," and from his having received this name it has been inferred that his mother was faithful to the God of Israel. **eight years old**—During the early years of his reign he must have been under the guidance of others, and these, no doubt, were loyal to Jehovah. We may reasonably suppose that his mother exerted a beneficial influence over him. **2. did... right**—He left the brightest name for piety and religious zeal among all the successors of David. He shares with Hezekiah the praise of walking perfectly in the way of his father David. His reign marks the last glory of the earthly kingdom of David.—*Smith*. "He did that which was right," not because the tendency of the nation was in that direction, for it was not, but in spite of the prevailing idolatry. **in the sight of the Lord**—His goodness was not simply external; it passed the scrutiny of him who sees motives as well as acts. Josiah was right at heart. **in the ways of David**—David was looked upon as the model king of Israel. His reign was the standard of excellence as regards religious devotion and zeal. A high tribute is here paid to the character and work of Josiah. **his father**—His ancestor.

II. DESTROYING IDOLATRY (vs. 3-7). 3. eighth year—When he was sixteen years old, **yet young**—He was still young although youths mature at an earlier age in the East than in the western world. **began to seek after the God**—Beginning early he could devote an unwasted life and unimpaired powers to the service of God. This date marks his entrance upon the divine life, a life that was to be abundantly fruitful in the moral reformation of the nation. **in the twelfth year**—Another of the important dates in Josiah's reign. **began to purge Judah**—His own righteous heart and life would not admit of his stopping short of the reformation of which there was the greatest need. "Things were in a bad condition, as we see from the bitter complaints and denunciations of Zephaniah and Jeremiah. Idolatry of the worst description was openly tolerated."—*Farrar*. He began the work of reform at the capital of his realm. **high places**—Shrines were placed by idolatrous nations upon hills and mountains, and the Jews had adopted their religious practises. **groves**—Asherim, symbols of degrading heathen worship. **4. altars of Baalim**—Baalim is the plural of Baal, who was worshiped in a variety of forms. **in his presence**—In the presence of Josiah, so that he might see that the work was proceeding in a thorough manner. **images**—"Sun-images."—*R. V.* **made dust of them**—Indicating the thoroughness of the destruction. Had idolatry been as fully destroyed in the hearts of the people, as were the outward symbols of idolatry, there would not have been a speedy return to the degrading practise. **strowed it upon the graves**—As a testimony against the wickedness of those who defiled themselves with false worship.

5. burnt the bones of the priests—The burning of human bones upon the altars would forever render them polluted. "Idolatry was so widespread and deep-seated that it must be violently torn from the life of the people." The prophecy of which this is the fulfilment is found in 1 Kings 13:1, 2. **6. Manasseh and Ephraim, etc.**—The northern kingdom had been taken into captivity by the Assyrians nearly a century before this, yet there were a few of the people of Israel in the land. Josiah probably purposed to carry his reforms to these tribes, as far as to Naphtali on the north and to Simeon on the south, to rid them of idolatry and to incorporate them in his kingdom.

Assyria was in conflict with the Medes, was tottering to her fall, and hence was paying little attention to conditions in Israel. **with their mat-tocks**—"In their ruins."—*R. V.* **7. he returned to Jerusalem**—Josiah was satisfied that the work which he had undertaken had been thoroughly accomplished, and the restoration of the worship of Jehovah demanded his attention. To this task he gave himself energetically.

III. REPAIRING THE TEMPLE (vs. 8-13). 8. in the eighteenth year—At twenty-six years of age Josiah had sought the Lord, and had been long engaged in the task of destroying idolatry, which he had finished. **had purged... the house**—The years of idolatry had left the temple neglected and polluted. Josiah followed the illustrious example of Hezekiah in cleansing the house of the Lord. It was not enough to destroy idolatry; the service and worship of the true God must be restored. **Shaphan**—He was the scribe, an officer of high rank. **to repair the house of the Lord**—The three men to whom was entrusted this work were among the principal men of the city and nation. It may be readily seen that the temple would need repairs, as it had been about two hundred years since it was repaired under Joash, who also was a boy king. **9. Hilkiah**—The son of Shalum, and grandson of Zadok (1 Chron. 6:12, 13). **delivered the money**—Josiah followed the example of Joash in collecting money to repair the temple. The money had come not only from Judah, but also from the remnants of the other tribes of Israel. **Levites**—The descendants of Levi. They performed duties pertaining to the temple. **they returned to Jerusalem**—"Of the inhabitants of Jerusalem."—*R. V.* **10. workmen**—Two classes of workmen are mentioned. There were the overseers who had charge of the repairs, and the workmen who did the work as carpenters and masons. **11. timber for couplings**—It may be seen how greatly the temple was in need of repairs from the fact that timber for the framework must be bought, as well as stone and other material. It had been three hundred fifty years since the building was erected. **to floor**—"To make beams for."—*R. V.* **houses**—These were either the chambers which were built about the temple or buildings connected with it. **which the kings of Judah had destroyed**—Manasseh and Amon are probably meant. The kings had neglected the house of the Lord and allowed it to fall into decay if they had not actually defaced it. **12. did the work faithfully**—The men had their hearts in the work, as was the case when the temple was repaired during the reign of Joash. Where there is genuine love for God's house and its services earnest efforts will be made to keep it in good repair. **could skill of instruments of musick**—"Were skillful with instruments of music."—*R. V.* **13. scribes, and officers, and porters**—The scribes were clerks, copyists and translators, the officers were magistrates and the porters were those who kept the temple doors. These were from the tribe of Levi.

QUESTIONS.—What did Manasseh do after he was restored to his kingdom? Who was Amon? What was his character and the length of his reign? How did he die? How old was Josiah when he began to reign? What was the character of his reign? When was he converted? What did he do in the twelfth year of his reign? How was it possible for Josiah to carry his reforms into the land of Israel? How did the king raise money to repair the temple? What can you say of the faithfulness of the workmen?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. Contrast the former and the latter parts of Manasseh's reign. 2. The nature and fruits of repentance. 3. A brief reference to Amon. (1) His parentage. (2) His character. (3) The length of his reign. (4) His death. 4. A study of parental influence. (1) Advantage of having godly parents. (2) A godly character in spite of an ungodly parentage. (3) Examples. 5. We study the last bright period in Judah's history.

II. THEME.—What a thoroughly good man can do.

III. JOSIAH'S CHARACTER.—1. Josiah's early training. (1) A wicked father. (2) Was his mother a worshiper of Jehovah? 2. Josiah seeking the Lord. (1) His age. (2) His success. (3) How to seek the Lord. 3. Josiah's character as recorded in the lesson. (1) He was right outwardly. (2) He was right at heart. (3) He was stable. 4. His character estimated from what he did. (1) Devoted to God. (2) Courageous. (3) Zealous. (4) Had moral convictions. 5. He may be compared with other kings of Judah. 6. A remarkable career. 7. His life is an inspiration and an encouragement to us all. 8. The unnamed helpers of Josiah. 9. A man of peace and piety, not of war.

IV. JOSIAH DESTROYING IDOLATRY.—1. The condition of the nation when he became king. (1) Manasseh had only partially corrected the evils of the first part of his reign. (2) Amon had added to the idolatrous tendency of the people. (3) The temple was neglected. (4) A fearful tide of evil for a boy king to encounter. 2. A wrecker of idols at twenty. 3. His plan of work. (1) He gave it his personal attention. (2) He was radical in his position regarding idolatry. (3) The extent of his work, (a) as to thoroughness, (b) as to territory. 4. The secret of his attitude toward idolatry,—his heart was right before the Lord.

V. JOSIAH REPAIRING THE TEMPLE.—1. Four kings who had already been greatly interested in the temple, David, Solomon, Joash, Hezekiah. 2. Reasons why the temple needed repairs. (1) Had stood a long time. (2) It had been neglected. 3. Reasons for restoring the temple worship. (1) Obedience to the divine command. (2) Idolatry had been destroyed and something must take its place. 4. Josiah's method in repairing the temple. (1) The collection of funds from Judah and the other tribes. (2) Organization of the working force. (3) The interest taken by the workers.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Independence of Christian character.

I. The outgrowth of personal conviction.

II. The basis of successful religious reform.

I. The outgrowth of personal conviction. It can not be said of Josiah that he was controlled either by heredity or environment. His history proves rather that God deals directly with every soul and "lighteth every man that cometh into the world." He acted upon his power of choice. Good and evil were before him. God's law had been kept by some of his ancestry and the result was good both to them and to the nation. Others had profaned God's law and instituted false worship, and evil was the result both to ruler and people. Four hundred years had passed since David's time, but his manner was not too old-fashioned for Josiah. God's design was more clearly discernible in his time, and certainly national affairs were con-

ducted more fully according to God's law. His wise choice was "to seek the God of David." Every individual is responsible to God regardless of how others may live. Josiah's early devotion is a bright example to follow. He began to seek God in a time of almost universal godlessness and corruption. He is a notable example showing the possibility of rising above and resisting evil environment. He is also an example showing the possibility of becoming truly pious regardless of the laws of heredity. He became a "righteous branch from a wicked root." Josiah is a most remarkable example of goodness springing up and attaining high standards under the most extraordinary, unfavorable circumstances. It is scarcely possible to contemplate the depth of degradation into which Judah had fallen. Two wicked kings in succession had undone all the reforms of good King Hezekiah. Though Manasseh had done his best in advanced life to bring back the people from the depths of sin to which he had led them, their reform proved to be only external. Through the pious endeavors of Josiah God gave Judah another call to repentance, another opportunity to reform. There are seasons even in degenerate times when the old type of piety is restored and lived over again, and triumphant faith is possessed and the heroism of those who have gone comes back like a new inspiration to lives and makes them shine out clear in the surrounding darkness. If it appears marvelous that righteous Hezekiah succeeded wicked Ahaz, it is still more so that Josiah succeeded the wicked Manasseh and Amon, and that, during his entire reign, he turned "neither to the right hand, nor to the left," and became known as the best of all Judah's kings.

II. The basis of successful religious reform. Josiah and his country reaped great good as a result of his early devotion to God. "Whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." His holy life encouraged others to live right. An exemplary life and conversation abundantly proved the sincerity and order of Josiah's piety. He put "first things first." He made personal piety his first duty for himself. For his people he began first to promote their religious condition. Earnest religion invariably brings forth its appropriate fruits in zeal for the honor of God, the purification of his worship and the putting away of evil practices. Josiah had a determined and conscientious purpose in his life-work. He advanced step by step in carrying out his religious duties under the light of his own convictions. Being set against all evil he "brake down," "cut down," "brake in pieces" and "burnt the bones," in a bold, radical and sweeping reform. Yet all his activity was inspired by true religious fervor. He was a king of rare value. The fact that he extended his work into Samaria shows that he had attained power and authority there. He wisely improved the opportunity, while other nations were engaged in their perplexing affairs, to find the remaining Israelites and seek to bring them into fellowship with God. T. E. A.

Blackboard Exercise

JOSIAH'S LIFE WAS GOOD.	REMEMBER NOW THY CREATOR	ARE WE STANDING TRUE TO OUR COVENANT?
HE TURNED THE WHOLE NATION GODWARD.		IF NOT WE HAVE NO EXCUSE.
HE WAS A REPAIRER, RESTORER, REFORMER.		WE HAVE THE BIBLE.

Practical Applications

"And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the ways of David his father" (v. 2). As we live so will others. That we may be good examples to those who look to us we must choose a perfect model. Josiah copied after his celebrated ancestor, David. Our model should be the only perfect pattern the world has ever seen—Jesus. To be like him we must study his life, his words and his deeds. We must think often of his loving patience, his wonderful humility, his unflinching diligence, his acts of self-sacrifice for others, his mode of reasoning and his ways of working. Thus, growing into his likeness, we shall reflect his image.

"And declined neither to the right hand, nor to the left" (v. 2). Many will watch our lives though they will not study God's words nor his works. A dying infidel once made this confession: "I could argue against the scriptures, but I could never argue against the holy life of my Aunt Mary." We are to be "the epistles of Christ... written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God... in fleshy tables of the heart" (2 Cor. 3:3). The world will not study the gospel of Christ; they will read the new gospel the Holy Spirit writes on our hearts. They will not read how Jesus lived; they will watch our every action. A young girl who had been cross and fretful was converted. She became patient, cheerful, kind, unselfish, charitable. Her infidel cousin, greatly surprised at the change, asked the reason. She told him the grace of God had changed her heart. He said to himself, "I don't believe God had anything to do with it, but I should like to be as good as she is, and I will." He formed good resolutions and constantly determined to live right, but as the days went by he was no better than before. As he failed he would study his cousin's character. He would read this living Bible and say to himself, "How can she, who has not so much knowledge or strength as I, do what I can not?" One day he exclaimed, "It must be the help of God, and I must seek it." Alone in his room he prayed to the God whose existence he had denied, and found peace in believing.

"Hesent Shaphan... to repair the house of the Lord" (v. 8). To be able to set others to work is a greater art than to be able to labor very earnestly one's self. Especially is this true in philanthropic endeavors to help people. To put a poor man in the way to earn one loaf of bread is better than to give him two. The Earl of Shaftsbury illustrated this principle when he purchased a number of trucks and hired them out by the day at a nominal sum during the hard times to poor men that they might earn a living by peddling vegetables. Those having charge of the funds were so true to their trust that no one desired a special reckoning with them. It is a grand thing when boys and girls are so faithful that it is not necessary to oversee them. Are you such a one? "Johnnie," said his father, "put your hand here and keep it on this letter till I come back." "Yes, father," cried the little fellow. When half an hour passed and his father did not come back Johnnie grew tired. Another half-hour passed, but Johnnie held bravely on. Father had bidden him and he would do what father wished; but, oh, how tired he was and how dark it was getting! Where was papa? He had started off with the man who had called upon him, forgetting all about the little boy. It was an hour and a half before his father came back, and Johnnie stood all that time holding the letter as he had been told. This was faithfulness.

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—It is blessed to devote the entire life to God.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

JOSIAH'S RECORD

Made king at 8

Sought God at 16

Destroyed idolatry at 20

Repaired the temple at 26

A good record. Impress the importance of making a good record for one's self. Call attention to the record that Manasseh made, also that of Amon, and show how undesirable such records are. Give brief accounts of Joseph and Samuel to show the wisdom and advantage of beginning early in life to love and serve the Lord. If these persons could make good records for themselves during their entire lives, we can do the same, but we must be at it now.

A king at eight. The children will be able to give you the names of two youthful kings besides Josiah. Write the names, Josiah, Manasseh and Josiah, and before each place the age at which he became king, and after each write the word or words expressing his character. Explain to the class that Josiah was under the guidance of others during his early years as king, for he would be unable to manage the affairs of government alone. It is thought his mother was a godly woman and influenced him for good.

A youth seeking God. Picture the early surroundings of Josiah. His father was a wicked man, and the people were largely given over to the worship of idols. In spite of evil influences this youth earnestly sought God. Do not fail to emphasize the necessity of seeking the Lord, and the many advantages of seeking him in youth. Explain that in order to find the Lord one must give himself to him, turning away from sin, earnestly praying to him, and fully trusting him for pardon. Note the expressions in the second verse which show Josiah's piety. "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord." Illustrate the difference between doing what is right in the sight of men, and doing what is right in the sight of God. Such illustrations may be drawn from the home life or from conduct in school. Josiah was ready for important public duties.

A young man destroying idolatry. Describe the prevalence of idolatry in Judah, and among the remnants of the tribes of Israel, and make a list of the symbols of heathen worship that Josiah destroyed. Call attention to the first two commandments and explain how the Jews had broken them. Observe the courage that Josiah must have possessed to go about this work against the prevailing tendency in the nation, repeating the last clause of the second verse. His work was thorough.

A man restoring the true religion. Josiah gives us an example of love for the house of the Lord. Picture the neglected and dilapidated condition of the temple, which had not been repaired for two hundred years. Recall the repairs made by Joash, another boy king. Idolatry had been destroyed and something must be given in its place, so Josiah established again the worship of Jehovah. He undertook enormous tasks and succeeded through his devotion and zeal, and the help of God.

LESSON V

HOME READINGS.—Mon., July 24.—Finding the law.—2 Chron. 34:14-33. Tu.—Blessings and cursings.—Deut. 28:1-19. Wed.—Covenant.—2 Chron. 34:29-33; 2 Kings 23:1-3. Th.—Passover.—2 Chron. 35:1-19. Fr.—High places.—2 Kings 23:4-20. Sat.—Turned to Jehovah.—2 Kings 23:24-27. Su.—Josiah lamented.—2 Chron. 35:20-27.

THE FINDING OF THE BOOK OF THE LAW.—2 Chron. 34: 14-33.**Print 34: 14-21, 29-33.****AUTHORIZED VERSION***(Memory Verse 21)****AMERICAN REVISION**

SUPT.—14 And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the Lord, Hil-ki'ah the priest found a book of the law of the Lord given by Mo'ses.

School.—15 And Hil-ki'ah answered and said to Sha'phan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hil-ki'ah delivered the book to Sha'phan.

16 And Sha'phan carried the book to the king, and brought the king word back again, saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they do it.

17 And they have gathered together the money that was found in the house of the Lord, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and to the hand of the workmen.

18 Then Sha'phan the scribe told the king, saying, Hil-ki'ah the priest hath given me a book. And Sha'phan read it before the king.

19 And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes.

20 And the king commanded Hil-ki'ah, and A-hi'kam the son of Sha'phan, and Ab'don the son of Mi'cah, and Sha'phan the scribe, and A-sai'ah a servant of the king's, saying,

21 Go, enquire of the Lord for me, and for them that are left in Is'ra-el and in Ju'dah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do after all that is written in this book.

29 Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Ju'dah and Je-ru'salem.

30 And the king went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Ju'dah, and the inhabitants of Je-ru'sa-lem, and the priests and the Le'vites, and all the people, great and small: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the Lord.

31 And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book.

32 And he caused all that were present in Je-ru'sa-lem and Ben'ja-min to stand to it. And the inhabitants of Je-ru'sa-lem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers.

33 And Jo-si'ah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Is'ra-el, and made all that were present in Is'ra-el to serve, even to serve the Lord their God. And all his days they departed not from following the Lord, the God of their fathers.

14 And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of Jehovah, Hilki'ah the priest found the book of the law of Jehovah given by Moses. **15** And Hilki'ah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of Jehovah. And Hilki'ah delivered the book to Shaphan. **16** And Shaphan carried the book to the king, and moreover brought back word to the king, saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they are doing. **17** And they have emptied out the money that was found in the house of Jehovah, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and into the hand of the workmen. **18** And Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilki'ah the priest hath delivered me a book. **19** And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes. **20** And the king commanded Hilki'ah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asai'ah the king's servant, saying, **21** Go ye, inquire of Jehovah for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found; for great is the wrath of Jehovah that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of Jehovah, to do according unto all that is written in this book.

29 Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. **30** And the king went up to the house of Jehovah, and all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, both great and small; and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of Jehovah. **31** And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before Jehovah, to walk after Jehovah, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book. **32** And he caused all that were found in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. **33** And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were found in Israel to serve, even to serve Jehovah their God. All his days they departed not from following Jehovah, the God of their fathers.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? **School.—**Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. Psa. 119:11.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—God's word is of priceless value and is within the reach of us all.

TOPIC.—Providential discoveries.

OUTLINE.—I. The book of the law found. II. The effect upon the king. III. Huldah's prophecy. IV. A public reading of the law.

TIME.—B. C. 621.

PLACE.—Jerusalem, in the temple.

PARALLEL ACCOUNT.—2 Kings 22:8-20.

READ.—2 Chron. 34, 35.

INTRODUCTION.—The deplorable condition of the Jewish nation, religiously, is indicated by the fact that

the book of the law, which was the basis of their religious system, had been lost, and apparently had not been missed. The many years of neglect of the house of the Lord, and the departure from Jehovah to the worship of idols had made all but a heathen nation of those whom God had chosen to be his "peculiar treasure." An encouraging feature appears, however, in that the book of the law had a powerful effect for good upon both king and people when it was read to them.

COMMENTARY.—I. THE BOOK OF THE LAW FOUND (vs. 14-18). **14.** brought out the money—The directions of Josiah with respect to repairing the house of the Lord were being carefully obeyed. The money contributed had been stored in some room in the temple and was brought out to

be used in prosecuting the work. **found the book of the law (R. V.)**—This must have been the temple copy, which should have been deposited by the ark of the covenant (Deut. 31:26). It is difficult to account for the loss of the book of the law. It is conjectured that during the time when Ahaz was profaning the temple some faithful priest hid the sacred roll lest it should be destroyed by the impious king. "It may be, however, that it had lain hid in the ark itself, which Manasseh had thrown aside into some of the many cells (2 Chron. 35: 3), or chambers, round the temple."—*Geikie*. **given by Moses—"By the hand of Moses."**—*R. V.* There is a difference of opinion as to how much was contained in the roll found. It is thought that it was Deut. 5-26, 28, since these chapters evidently contain the passages read to the king. Others believe that the main part of the Pentateuch was included. Another view is given by Whedon as follows: "The traditional and most probable meaning is, that this was the same book of the law (or a true and complete copy of it) which Moses wrote and ordered the Levite-priests to deposit and keep in the side of the ark of God (Deut. 31:9, 24-26),—the entire Pentateuch. Against this traditional belief and most obvious sense of the words, the bare assumption that it was only our present book of Deuteronomy, or a digest of the laws of Moses, is destitute of any force."

15. Hilkiah—The high priest. **Shaphan the scribe**—The officer next to the king. **16. carried the book to the king**—Shaphan, bearing the book with him, comes and gives a calm account of the business on which he had been sent at first, namely, the inquiry and arrangement about the money which had been gathered. When that part of the business is dispatched he tells the king concerning the book that has been discovered.—*Cam. Bible*. **17. gathered together the money**—"Emptied out the money."—*R. V.* The money had been collected, and carefully guarded until it was needed. **overseers . . . workmen**—Those to whom had been committed the work of repairing the temple. **18. a book**—Shaphan had already read the book, or portions of it (2 Kings 22: 8), and no doubt fully understood its character, but he did not tell the king that it was the book of the law; he spoke of it as a book and allowed the king to form his own opinion as to its importance. **read it before the king**—King Josiah gave Shaphan directions to read it to him, for he was eager to know the contents of the book. The scarcity of books gave great value to those that existed. The only way of producing copies was by the slow process of copying by hand.

II. THE EFFECT UPON THE KING (vs. 19-21). **19. he rent his clothes**—It is evident from 2 Kings 22: 19 that the portion read was from Deut. 28. The words "horried the pious monarch; for all they contained, and the law to which they were appended, were wholly new to him."—*Farrar*. Josiah rent his clothes because of grief over the sins of the nation and because of the calamities which the words read declared should follow such sins. There must have been copies of the book of the law in existence but the king had never before heard these momentous words. **20. the king commanded**—A delegation of men high in character and importance was at once sent to learn more definitely the import of the words read from the book of the law. **21. enquire of the Lord**—The men readily understood that they were to go to a prophet of the Lord for an interpretation of the words. **left in Israel and in Judah**—Josiah appears to have extended his interest and dominion

over all that remained of the twelve tribes of Israel. **our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord**—The king realized that the condition of Judah and Israel was unfavorable and even distressing because of the past sins of the nations. In his words, "our fathers," he probably refers to Manasseh and Amon. In the light of the book of the law he believed that greater calamities were just ahead.

III. HULDAH'S PROPHECY (vs. 22-28). The king's delegation proceeded at once to Huldah the prophetess. "All we know of this celebrated woman is recorded here and in the parallel history of Kings. But this short narrative has immortalized her name. Probably the two prophets, Jeremiah and Zephaniah, were absent from the city. But God is not straitened in his instruments. He can use a woman to speak for him as well as a man, a humble person as well as an exalted one. Huldah had the full prophetic gift, and spoke as boldly, confidently and promptly as would Isaiah or Jeremiah."—*Whedon*. The word given to the king by Huldah was not reassuring for the nation. Calamity was not far away, yet Josiah, because of his having fully turned to the Lord, would not see the desolation of the nation but would die in peace.

IV. A PUBLIC READING OF THE LAW (vs. 29-33). **29. gathered . . . all the elders**—Josiah's work of personally serving the Lord, of removing idolatry and of repairing the temple prepared the way for finding the book of the law, but he could not stop there. He must publish to the nation the great truths which he had heard. **30. went up into the house of the Lord**—Thus honoring the long-neglected temple. **all the people**—The words of the law were read "to an immense concourse assembled in the court of the temple, in which every order of the state, priests and prophets, no less than nobles and peasants, heard the new revelation from the lips of the royal reformer, as he stood erect, leaning against the pillar, at the entrance of the inner court, beside the sacred laver, himself the new lawgiver of his people."—*Stanley*. **31. the king . . . made a covenant**—The integrity and devotion of Josiah are seen in his readiness to make a "covenant before the Lord" to obey his word "with all his heart." This act was in perfect harmony with his previous record. As he had seen the path of duty he had courageously and energetically followed it. **32. caused all . . . to stand to it**—In 2 Kings 23: 3 the words are, "And all the people stood to the covenant." The people of the assembly were moved by the words of the king. "Kindled to enthusiasm by his example, the elders, in the name of the people, hastened to give their eager concurrence in the act of the king; the whole body of the people, apparently, adopting their act by a loud 'Amen.' Judah was once more, at least in outward form, the covenant people of God."—*Geikie*. **33. took away all the abominations**—He completed the work of purging the land of idolatry begun six years previously.

QUESTIONS.—Who was king of Judah at this time? What was found while the temple was being repaired? Who was Shaphan? What did he do with the book? What effect did the reading of the book have upon the king? Why did he rent his clothes? Who composed the delegation that the king appointed? What did he command them to do? Who was Huldah? What did she say would come upon Jerusalem? What message did she send the king? What assembly did the king call and for what purpose? Into what covenant did Josiah and the people enter? What great work did the king complete?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. The present lesson connected with the preceding one. 2. Josiah continued to be humble and devoted. 3. An outline of his great work for the uplifting of the nation. 4. Respects in which he is an example for us. (1) Humble. (2) Courageous. (3) Devoted. (4) Active. (5) Persistent. 5. A lesson on the power of God's word.

II. THEME.—The value and authority of God's word.

III. GOD'S WORD LOST.—1. The scarcity of copies of the law and the cause. 2. The provision for preserving the book of the law in the temple. 3. The temple copy was lost either through neglect or opposition to it. 4. The religious condition of the nation accounts for the loss of the law, and shows the absence of God's word. 5. God's word is lost to-day. (1) By those who neglect it. (2) By those who oppose it. (3) By those who refuse to obey it. 6. The word of God is lost to thousands who have numerous copies of it in their own homes.

IV. GOD'S WORD FOUND.—1. Steps leading up to the finding of the book of the law. (1) A king found the Lord. (2) A king overthrowing idolatry. (3) A king repairing the house of the Lord. (4) Men faithful to their master and earnest in the task assigned them. 2. The book recognized. 3. Ways in which the word of God may be found now. (1) By reading it carefully. (2) By obeying its precepts. (3) By a prayerful study of its truths.

V. GOD'S WORD READ.—1. By Shaphan, the king's secretary. 2. In the hearing of the king. 3. The portion probably read to Josiah. 4. The appeal to Huldah, the prophetess and the reply. 5. The effect upon the king. 6. The book read before the great assembly. 7. Many had never heard the law read. 8. The obligation upon us to read the Bible. (1) It is God's word to us. (2) Its truth can be understood by us. (3) It is perfectly suited to our needs. 9. Our obligation to bring God's word to others.

VI. GOD'S WORD OBEYED.—1. The covenant made by Josiah as a result of the reading of the law. 2. The covenant made by the people. 3. The extent to which the covenant was obeyed. 4. The result to Josiah personally of obeying the word. 5. The nation was too far gone to escape the consequences of long years of disobedience. 6. The effects of the acceptance of God's word in all lands.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Providential discoveries.

- I. God's rule of life for men.
- II. Right basis for reformation.

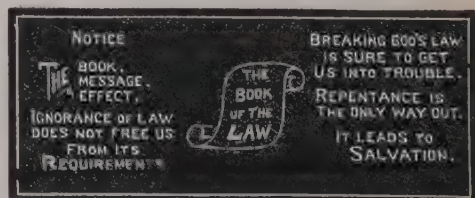
I. God's rule of life for men. The loss by a nation of its sacred book was a strange and extraordinary occurrence. When the word of God was lost Judah sank rapidly into wickedness and consequent weakness. Their knowledge of truth was soon lost and the true worship of Jehovah passed away. The temple services ceased. The sanctuary was polluted. False religion came in like a flood. It was a time of spiritual desolation. Crimes of violence and deeds of oppression were practised everywhere. Shaphan brought to Josiah, the king, the greatest and best treasure possible, out of the temple which was falling to ruin. It was Josiah's zeal in the repairing of the temple which prepared the way for the discovery of the book of the law. When they brought the money for repairs they found

the book. Though sinfully lost it was providentially found, and reverently examined. The book of the law was the only "preacher," but as Shaphan read it aloud its words went like sharp arrows to the heart of the king, causing grief on account of the transgressions of the people, and great dismay in view of the divine judgment. No other book exercises such power over men as the Bible and it is because of the nature of the truths it declares and from the inward attestation which its words find in the conscience. It reveals sin and discloses the path to a better life, and thus proves it to be God's word. Mankind needs a book to keep alive in the earth the knowledge of a spiritual and personal God. "The Bible is the charter of the world's hope and the mainspring of its reformation." Huldah's message confirmed the threatenings of the law but assured Josiah that his repentance and humility were acceptable to God. His labor was not to be entirely fruitless. Though the nation must suffer captivity as a result of continued apostasy, many would truly repent under his reformation who would keep faith alive during the exile and would promote true worship after the captivity. God commended Josiah because his heart was tender.

II. Right basis for reformation. The discovery of the book of the law gave Josiah a new basis for faith and enlarged his conception of duty. It marked a distinct turning-point in his reformation. His honest efforts toward reformation were rewarded by a clearer knowledge of God's will. Josiah made the word of God the basis of his reform. It was all important to him to find the truth of God. He regarded it as the greatest blessing he could bestow upon his people to acquaint them with it. He was not content merely to know God and serve him himself. He was determined that so far as he had authority or influence others should know and serve the Lord. He acted with firmness, fearlessness, promptness and determination such as becomes one who is doing the work of God. It is when men thus embody true thought and desire into action that they rise to true manhood. Josiah deeply deplored the sins of Judah and determined upon a complete reformation. He knew that sin had brought all the misery that Judah suffered. Neglect, unbelief and disobedience had caused them to suffer the loss of the law book. Happiness and prosperity depended upon a return to God and true worship. Josiah made a covenant with God, embracing all that had to do with outward piety and all that was included in the devotion of heart and soul to God. His was a consecration that embraced all the known will of God. He set the standard and called the people "to stand to it." So convinced was he that universal reform was the best thing that he included all who were left of the ten tribes as well as all Judah. It was one of God's gracious providences to favor Judah with so noble a king as Josiah.

T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise



Practical Applications

"Hilkiah... said... I have found the book of the law" (v. 15). A young girl lay ill unto death. A friend coming in, she said, "I have been feeding on one verse all the morning." "What verse?" "Whom I shall see for myself... and not another" (Job 19:27). "I know that verse perfectly," the friend interrupted. "It comes after, 'I know that my redeemer liveth.' The verse is, 'Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.'" "What do you understand by the expression, 'Not another'?" asked the sick girl. "Why, it means—it just means that we shall see the Lord ourselves," she stammered, and asked, "Have you found out any remarkable meaning?" "In the German Bible they are rendered differently and our marginal translation is like theirs." "I never look at the margin or the references." "I find them a great help in comparing scripture with scripture" (1 Cor. 2:13). "What is the word in the margin, instead of 'another'?" "A stranger," the dying girl said; then repeated softly, "Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not a stranger," and went on, "I am in the valley of the shadow. I shall soon cross the dark river, but he will be with me, and not a stranger. He is the good Shepherd, and I know his voice; a stranger would I not follow. And when I open my eyes in another world, it is the Lord Jesus whom I shall behold—my own Savior, my own true Friend, and 'not a stranger.' I shall at last see him whom, not having seen, I love." She closed her eyes, exhausted, and her friend went away, thinking, "Lillian has drawn more comfort and profit from one verse than I have from the whole book. I have read the scriptures; she has searched them. I have been like one floating carelessly over the surface of waters under which lie pearls; she has dived deep and made the treasure her own."

"And Shaphan read it before the king" (v. 18). A plain-spoken man walking home with a young minister after a morning service, said, "I noticed that you omitted the reading of the scriptures." "Yes, I made the introductory service as short as I could because my sermon was so long." "But why," rejoined the man, "didn't you leave out some of your own stuff?" If the question was not polite, it was pertinent. Anything in a service had better be omitted than the word of God.

"He rent his clothes" (v. 19). The king let the arrow of conviction into his heart. When he heard the truth he accepted it. This is the way of salvation for the sinner, the way of enlightenment for the saint. A gifted writer says, "If a cluster of heavenly fruit hangs within reach, gather it. If a promise lies upon the page as a bank check, cash it. If a prayer is recorded, launch it as a feathered arrow from the bow of your desire. If an example of holiness gleams before you, treat that its brilliancy may radiate your life like a star."

"Enquire of the Lord for me" (v. 21). Make time, take time for "daily" study (Acts 17:11). The early morning is best. F. B. Meyer says, "Aim to secure at least a half-hour before breakfast for leisurely, loving Bible study. It will soon be all too short. The more you study the more you will wish to. If this is really utterly impossible and you conscientiously take what time you do have, the miracle of the manna will be repeated. He that gathered much had nothing over. All you get in your morning is not too much for the needs of the day. And he that gathered little had no lack (Exod. 16:18)." The word of God is nourishing, and we should feed upon it.

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—The word of God is a rich treasure.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

The Bible is God's word

FINDING
READING
OBEYING } The word of God

The Bible is God's word. Tell briefly how God prompted his servants in ancient times to write the book which we all love, the Bible. It was written by many different persons during about sixteen hundred years. It teaches us the way to heaven. It tells us how to live so that our lives shall be the most happy and useful. The greatest men have a high regard for the Bible. Wicked men have tried to destroy the word of God. They have attempted to prove it is untrue, but it is spreading more widely and having a greater influence now than ever in the past. Every one should learn portions of the Bible by heart. See if each child can not repeat a verse from the Bible. Teach them a short verse and impress upon their minds the thought that it is a part of God's word.

Finding God's word. Tell how the book of the law was found. It was because Josiah sought the Lord and went to work in an effort to destroy idolatry and restore the worship of God. Tell how the law may have been lost. If people want the Bible to-day they can have it, but it is lost to thousands because they do not care for it. Explain the difference between the number of copies in the world then and now. In Martin Luther's time the Bible was almost lost, for he never saw one until he was a man. A beautiful Bible was once found in an ash-barrel, placed there because the owner did not care for it. A man in South America found a leaf of the New Testament in a pile of rubbish, read it, and later found the whole book. It was the means of saving a number of souls.

Reading God's word. Relate the story of Shaphan's reading the book for himself, then for the king, and later it was read before a vast assembly. Tell the effect this reading had upon Josiah. He had never heard it read before, and he was a king. Ask the children if they can remember the first time they ever heard the Bible read. Explain why Josiah rent his clothes when he heard God's words. A Japanese found a Dutch New Testament floating in the water. He became so much interested in it that he procured a copy in a language he could read, and soon became a Christian. Where the Bible is read and accepted it makes a great change for the better. Call forth various reasons why one should read the Bible and make a list of them. No one should ever be ashamed to be seen reading God's word.

Obedying God's word. Secure a number of answers to the question, "What will obedience to God's word lead us to do?" Note the things that Josiah and his people did as they undertook to obey the law. Tell the story of the men being sent to the prophetess Huldah to inquire the meaning of the law. Severe punishment was soon to be visited upon the nation for their long neglect of the law of God. Had they kept God's commands, the life of the nation would have been prolonged.

LESSON VI

HOME READINGS.—Mon., July 31.—Jeremiah acquitted.—Jer. 26: 1-24. Tu.—Jeremiah's warnings.—Jer. 25: 1-14. Wed.—Warning of Micah.—Mic. 3: 1-12. Th.—Warning of Malachi.—Mal. 1: 1-14. Fr.—Jesus adjudged guilty.—Matt. 26: 57-68. Sat.—Stephen adjudged guilty.—Acts 6: 8-7: 60. Su.—Rock of my strength.—Psa. 62: 1-12.

JEREMIAH TRIED AND ACQUITTED.—Jer. 26: 1-24. Print 26: 7-19.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 13, 14)

*AMERICAN REVISION

SUPT.—7 So the priests and prophets and all the people heard Jer-e-mi'ah speaking these words in the house of the Lord.

School.—8 Now it came to pass, when Jer-e-mi'ah had made an end of speaking all that the Lord had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die.

9 Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the Lord, saying, This house shall be like Shi'loh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant? And all the people were gathered against Jer-e-mi'ah in the house of the Lord.

10 When the princes of Ju'dah heard these things, then they came up from the king's house unto the house of the Lord, and sat down in the entry of the new gate of the Lord's house.

11 Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears.

12 Then spake Jer-e-mi'ah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard.

13 Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God; and the Lord will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.

14 As for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you.

15 But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.

16 Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets: This man is not worthy to die: for he hath spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God.

17 Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying,

18 Mi'cah the Mo-ras'thite prophesied in the days of Hez-e-ki'ah king of Ju'dah, and spake to all the people of Ju'dah, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Zi'on shall be plowed like a field, and Je-ru'sa-lem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest.

19 Did Hez-e-ki'ah king of Ju'dah and all Ju'dah put him at all to death? did he not fear the Lord, and besought the Lord, and the Lord repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? Psa. 27: 1.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—It requires faith and courage to follow one's convictions of duty.

TOPIC.—God's terms with sinners.

OUTLINE.—I. Warnings given by Jeremiah. II. Charges against the prophet. III. Jeremiah's defense. IV. Jeremiah's acquittal.

TIME.—About B. C. 608.

PLACE.—Jerusalem, at the temple.

INTRODUCTION.—Jeremiah ranks as one of the foremost of the prophetic writers. Living in the most troublous times of the Jewish nation, he felt keenly their fallen condition and foresaw clearly the destruction that threatened them. His prophetic ca-

7 And the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of Jehovah.

8 And it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that Jehovah had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold on him, saying, Thou shalt surely die. 9 Why hast thou prophesied in the name of Jehovah, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant? And all the people were gathered unto Jeremiah in the house of Jehovah.

10 And when the princes of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king's house unto the house of Jehovah; and they sat in the entry of the new gate of Jehovah's house. 11 Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy of death; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears. 12 Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, Jehovah sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard. 13 Now therefore amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of Jehovah your God; and Jehovah will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you. 14 But as for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as is good and right in your eyes. 15 Only know ye for certain that, if ye put me to death, ye will bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof; for of a truth Jehovah hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.

16 Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets: This man is not worthy of death; for he hath spoken to us in the name of Jehovah our God. 17 Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying, 18 Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah; and he spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Zion shall be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest. 19 Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him to death? did he not fear Jehovah, and entreat the favor of Jehovah, and Jehovah repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus should we commit great evil against our own souls.

reer began about the middle of the reign of Josiah and continued during the reigns of Jehoahaz, Jehoia-kim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah. He lived to see the kingdom go into the Babylonish captivity of which he had prophesied (Jer. 25: 11). The sins of the people weighed heavily upon his sensitive nature, so much so, that he has been called "the weeping prophet." He was of a timid disposition, and it required faith and courage for him to declare the unpopular messages with which God entrusted him, yet he spoke with clearness and power the words of the Lord.

COMMENTARY.—I. WARNINGS GIVEN BY JEREMIAH (vs. 1-6). Jeremiah was the son of Hilkiah, a priest, but probably not the Hilkiah who was high priest in the time of Josiah. His home was at Anathoth, a priestly city a few miles from Jerusalem. He was in a position to be familiar with the

religious and political life of the nation. Called in early life to be a prophet (Jer. 1: 6), and being a priest also, weighty responsibilities rested upon him. "In misery and continual peril of death he witnessed the fall of the state and the destruction of Jerusalem; he survived it, but in the silent tomb of an alien land," for he died in Egypt. The prophecies of which a brief summary are given in the lesson are recorded in chapters 7-10. God directed the prophet to speak these words to the people that they might turn from their evil ways and humble themselves before him, yet they did not heed his words. "The more definite he had become in his warnings, the more he excited the wrath of the false prophets and of those who sided with them; and now that he had explicitly announced (Jer. 25: 11) a seventy years' captivity, their indignation boiled over, and they sought to compass his death."—*treane*. The frequency and persistency with which God had sent instructions and warnings to his people are shown in the prophet's words, "Both rising up early, and sending them." The declaration that the temple would be made like Shiloh expressed the doom that awaited the house of the Lord if the people failed to "hearken." Shiloh was once the seat of Israelitish government and the religious center, but it had been abandoned and had fallen into decay.

II. CHARGES AGAINST THE PROPHET (vs. 7-11). **7. priests... prophets... people**—The words of Jeremiah had engaged the attention of all classes. If, as the Septuagint has it, the prophets were "false prophets," it is easily seen why there was such a hostile feeling against the speaker. **8. made an end of speaking**—The hearers respectfully held their peace until the message was delivered. **all the people**—A phrase indicating a general agreement among themselves. **took him**—"Laid hold on him."—*R. V.* **thou shalt surely die**—The ground upon which this penalty was declared was that Jeremiah had prophesied falsely and the punishment according to the law was death (Deut. 18: 20). **9. why hast thou prophesied**—Since the people were unwilling to believe the prophet's message, they persuaded themselves that he was a false prophet. **gathered against**—"Gathered unto."—*R. V.* The trial was about to take place. **10. the princes of Judah**—Probably the judicial officers who were about the palace, the germ of the Sanhedrin of later times. They evidently had the power of life and death.—*Whedon*. **heard these things**—Upon hearing the tumult of the people they understood that their services were needed to settle the disturbance. **entry of the new gate**—It was probably the gate built by Jotham (2 Kings 15: 35). Trials were usually held at such a place as this. **11. then spake the priests... unto the princes**—A formal accusation was presented against the arrested prophet, and the ground of the accusation. **prophesied against this city**—Their unbelief had construed the words of a true prophet into a false prophecy, and they would rather have Jeremiah put to death than accept the message.

III. JEREMIAH'S DEFENSE (vs. 12-15). **12. then spake Jeremiah**—He was permitted to plead his own cause in the presence of those who had authority in the case and before his accusers. **the Lord sent me to prophesy**—We can not fail to admire the calm confidence of the prophet. When he delivered the message he was certain it was from the Lord and he was prepared to plead divine authority for the words he had uttered. This was his only defense, but it was sufficient. Their complaint was in reality against God rather than against the

prophet. **13. amend your ways and your doings**—From defending himself he turned aside to exhort his accusers. "'Ways' will mean rather the settled habits, 'doings' the separate acts which go to form them."—*Cam. Bible*. Jeremiah had only the welfare of his people at heart, and he seems to have lost sight of his own danger in considering the danger that threatened the nation. **the Lord will repent him of the evil**—The destruction which God had foretold was to fall upon the people because of their sins, but if they would humble themselves and seek the Lord, the punishment would be averted. God would change his attitude toward them if they would change their attitude toward him. **14. I am in your hand**—His personal safety was of trifling importance in comparison with the welfare of the nation, yet he did not wish them to consider him a false prophet, for in so doing they would invite the destruction of which he had warned them. **15. innocent blood**—The prophet was conscious of his own integrity. **of a truth**—"Thomas Aquinas points to Jeremiah's words here as an illustration of the firmness of conviction which in the main sustained the prophets in their trying and dangerous calling."

IV. JEREMIAH'S ACQUITTAL (vs. 16-24). **16. not worthy to die**—The nobles, reckless and worldly as they were, with a deeper sense of justice than his fanatical assailants, solemnly acquitted him.—*Stanley*. The princes and the people in general were convinced that Jeremiah was a true prophet, even if he brought a message that strongly condemned them, and that he was seeking their highest good. **17. the elders of the land**—These represented the assembled congregation, giving voice to the sentiment of the people.—*Whedon*. The term, elders of Israel, occurs in Exod. 3: 16. Some have supposed that the elders represented the people as the princes represented the king in the trial, and that the elders concurred in the decision of the princes. **18. Micah**—One of the minor prophets who prophesied somewhat earlier than Jeremiah. The words which the elders quoted in connection with Jeremiah's acquittal are found in Mic. 3: 12. **Zion shall be plowed**—Utterly devastated. The words of Micah had been fully as severe as those of Jeremiah, yet no penalty came to him; the people on the other hand humbled themselves and the threatened destruction was turned aside. **19. besought the Lord**—Hezekiah, so far from killing him, was led to "fear the Lord," and pray for remission of the sentence against Judah (2 Chron. 32: 26). **thus might we procure**—"Thus might we commit."—*R. V.* **20-24**. The case of Urijah is cited as a further ground for justifying Jeremiah in the stern message which he brought to the Jews. "It would seem that Jeremiah added this incident in order to perfect the contrast between Hezekiah and Jehoiakim, and thus still more perfectly illustrate the difficulties and dangers by which he was environed."—*Whedon*. The prophet had a faithful friend in the influential Ahikam who effectually protected him from those who sought his life. Jeremiah was preserved from his enemies.

QUESTIONS.—When did Jeremiah prophesy? Where does he rank among prophets? What other office did he hold? What prophecy did he utter that angered the people? What effort was made against him? Before whom was Jeremiah brought to trial? Where? What defense did the prophet make? What was his manner during the trial? What was the decision of the court? What did Jeremiah exhort the people to do? What reference was made to Micah? To Urijah? What faithful friend came to the assistance of Jeremiah?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. A review of the good work done by Josiah. 2. His death (2 Chron. 35: 20-27). 3. His reforms were not lasting. 4. His sons Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim were in turn his successors. 5. A study of Jeremiah. (1) The date of his birth is uncertain, probably a few years before Josiah's accession to the throne. (2) His parentage. (3) His early home. (4) His offices, priest and prophet. (5) His character. (6) Conditions which he encountered in Judah.

II. THEME.—The boldness and confidence of God's faithful servants.

III. DECLARING STERN MESSAGES.—1. Jeremiah was by nature shrinking and timid, yet bold to speak in the name of the Lord. 2. The occasion for words of warning. 3. The nature of Jeremiah's messages in chapters 7-10, and 25. 4. The prophecy of the seventy years' captivity in Babylon (Jer. 25: 11). 5. The reasons for this visitation of judgment. 6. The frequency with which warnings had been given. 7. The disposition to regard warnings lightly. 8. The mercy displayed in giving warnings.

IV. THE PROPHET ACCUSED AND THREATENED.—1. The accusers of Jeremiah. 2. The basis of their accusations. 3. They had listened to the prophet's words to the end. 4. Their unwillingness to believe the message and humble themselves. 5. They charged Jeremiah with being a false prophet, and declared him to be worthy of death according to the Mosaic law.

V. JEREMIAH'S DEFENSE.—1. Note the clearness and boldness of Jeremiah's reply. 2. The only defense he offered was the declaration that he had spoken the words which God commanded. 3. The prophet's burden for the welfare of his people. 4. His earnest exhortation in the midst of the trial. 5. His willingness to suffer deserved punishment.

VI. A FULL ACQUITTAL.—1. The princes had authority in the case. 2. Their judgment upon hearing both sides. 3. Convinced that Jeremiah was a true prophet. 4. Compare the trial of the apostles (Acts 5: 38, 39). 5. The argument presented by the elders of the land, that Micah had spoken similar words and was not punished. 6. The case of Urijah. 7. Jeremiah had a faithful friend in Ahikam. 8. God's defense of his own servants.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—God's terms with sinners.

I. Presented through his prophet.

II. Evaded by misrepresentation.

I. Presented through his prophet. God directed Jeremiah where to speak, when to speak, what to speak and to whom to speak. Neither to please men nor to save himself was Jeremiah permitted to diminish a word. He met the people assembled for their devotions and gave them in God's name a plain, practical, rational and pathetic sermon on repentance and reformation. The law was what God himself had set before them. Those who would not be subject to the commands of God subjected themselves to the curse of God. The message was God's entreaty to the people to repent and also a declaration of what their refusal to do so would bring. Jeremiah declared he was commissioned of God and spoke only the words he gave him. He mingled hope with warning. His prophecy aimed at the real good of the nation, making the morality of the nation as imperative as that of the individual. Jeremiah was candid in warning the people of their punishment. He was prudent in

declaring his divine mission. He had charity toward those whom he exhorted to repent. Though he spoke fearlessly he spoke of peace as well as wrath, and assured all men of God's mercy to the penitent. Yet Jeremiah's message gave such offense that he was in danger of losing his life for presenting it. Instead of awakening conviction among the priests it exasperated them.

II. Evaded by misrepresentation. The priests and prophets assumed that the thing which Jeremiah prophesied was absolutely impossible, and proceeded to deal with him as a criminal. He showed them that his motives were good, and if they did not make good use of his message it would be their own fault. He assured them repeatedly that he was God's messenger and spoke what was appointed unto him to say, and was therefore under divine protection. He warned them against their danger if they proceeded against him. He had no fear of death and having a good conscience in a good cause he was fearless. He exhibited resignation, meekness and cheerfulness under persecution. As a divinely-commissioned prophet Jeremiah was above all human tribunals. They might think that killing the prophet would defeat the prophecy, though it would but add to their guilt and aggravate their ruin. Jeremiah stood firm, and God wonderfully preserved him. He faithfully proclaimed God's message though priests and false prophets spitefully persecuted him. He stood to his doctrine to the letter in the face of his persecutors and God raised up men to protect and deliver him. It was the prudent princes who stilled the excitement and prevented the infuriated people from carrying out their designs upon the life of the defenseless prophet Jeremiah. These men constituted themselves into a court of appeal, before which prophet and people were summoned. Before them Jeremiah made his defense. His plea was ever the same, that he could not but utter the words with which the Lord had sent him. His bold and ingenuous defense turned the situation in his favor. The people recalled former prophecies and saw that Jeremiah was only reaffirming the predictions of Micah delivered in the days of Hezekiah. They pointed to the method of good King Hezekiah as contrasted with the violent measures King Jehoiakim would favor against God's prophets. He was neither pious toward God nor just toward men. This better element among the people prevailed and the hand of violence was stayed and Jeremiah was left to go free. Sinners are the same in all ages, ever ready to execute vengeance upon those who interrupt their carnal security by warning them of impending punishment upon the impenitent. Not daring to challenge God they presume that the messenger is the offender, the one who is speaking blasphemy against God. In their pretentious righteousness they put their captive under penalty of law. Like Herod with John the Baptist, Jehoiakim would not have scrupled to quench in blood the light that cast such strong condemnation upon his oppressive actions. T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

JEREMIAH:
FAITHFUL IN THE
FACE OF DEATH.

NOT GUILTY

IT TAKES COURAGE
TO SPEAK GOD'S WORD.

GOD RAISED UP
FRIENDS.

THE WORLD IS
WILLING TO HEAR
ABOUT LOVE.

WE SHOULD BE
WILLING TO HEAR
ABOUT JUSTICE,
TRUTH AND
RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Practical Applications

"The people were gathered against Jeremiah" (v. 9). It is no small thing to oppose a tide of worldliness and sin. Manton, who wrote two hundred fifty years ago, said: "Many men owe their religion not to grace, but to the favor of the times. If it is in fashion, they may profess it at a cheap rate, because none contradict it." Indeed it shows they are extremely bad when they may be good without any loss to themselves, but it does not show they are good that are only good in good times." Jeremiah was good in bad times. He was faithful to Jehovah, when royalty, nobility and the adherents of idolatry were opposed to him. Opposition to him arose because he spoke the words to Judah that God had given him. No age has been free from the sin of opposing God's truth and God's people. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3: 12). Jeremiah could have been well thought of by Jehoiakim, as were other priests and prophets, had he been willing to withhold the message which God gave him; and yet in their hearts they would have despised him if he had spoken contrary to the word of the Lord and they had known that he had so spoken. Jeremiah was fearless even when "the people were gathered against" him, for he had taken his stand on God's side.

"Amend your ways" (v. 13). So far from cringing before his opposers, the prophet boldly exhorted them to turn from their wicked ways. In the history of the Christian church it has frequently occurred that godly men have been accused before an ecclesiastical court, and they themselves have turned accusers. There was great need for Jeremiah's accusers to amend their ways. They were going in the ways of unbelief, greed and idolatry. They could break off their "sins by righteousness" (Dan. 4: 27). They could seek for pardon and find it. The only successful way for one to amend his ways is by hearty repentance and implicit faith in Jesus. A reformation independent of divine assistance will not meet the demand. In every case where the heart is sincere and there is an earnest effort to find the Lord he is present to assist.

"The Lord hath sent me" (v. 15). An aged Christian man was making his way through a section of country infested with robbers. He had been urged to arm himself with revolvers for defense, but he declined, and took his pocket Bible instead of any deadly weapon. On his journey he was warned that he was approaching the den of a band of notorious robbers, but as he must find shelter and food he pressed on and reached the home of the desperadoes. They asked him if he was not afraid to travel there alone and unarmed. His reply was, "No, this is my weapon of defense," showing his Bible. "I always read a chapter and pray, too, before I retire. I know you are robbers, but I shall read and pray here to-night, and you must join with me." He was jeered at for his words, but as he read from the Bible, his hearers became attentive, and kneeled as he offered prayer. The Christian man slept soundly through the night, read and prayed again in the morning, and left the robbers who thanked him for his interest in their welfare. It requires courage to be a Christian. It is cowardly to yield to evil suggestions and associations. Jeremiah did not hesitate to declare that the words he spoke were God's words, even though they were a stern rebuke to his fellow Jews, and foretold the destruction of the sacred city. God designs that we should know him and that we should know that we know him.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought. — God's blessing is upon those who serve him faithfully.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

Jeremiah a true prophet

Speaking God's words

Accused by the people

Declared not guilty

A true prophet. Review briefly the reign of Josiah, who became king at the age of eight years. Call for the names of six or more prophets and place them upon the board, indicating those who wrote books. Explain the work of a prophet, referring to Jonah's mission to Nineveh and Isaiah's prediction of the coming Messiah. Make an outline of Jeremiah's life. His name may mean "exalted of the Lord." His birthplace was Anathoth, and his father was Hilkiah, a priest. Jeremiah was both a priest and a prophet. He prophesied during a period of about forty years. He has been called the weeping prophet, because he grieved much over the sins of his nation and over the destruction that was to come upon them in a few years.

Speaking God's words. Tell the class how long the Jewish people had been disobedient and idolatrous, and how often prophets had been sent to them warning them of their danger. They had humbled themselves from time to time, but soon returned to their sinful ways. Study the prophecies of Jeremiah in chapters 7-10, and 25, becoming so familiar with them that you can tell in simple language the message the prophet spoke to the people at the house of the Lord, as mentioned in this lesson. There was yet hope for the nation if they would believe the message and humble themselves. Mention the fact that Jeremiah was a timid man and that it took great courage for him to deliver this stern message.

An offended people. The prophet's hearers did not wish to believe that their city and nation were going to be destroyed. In January of last year there was a destructive flood in the city of Paris. The Seine River arose to a point higher than it had been before in a hundred years. There were some who recognized the danger and tried faithfully to give the warning, but many only laughed because they would not believe it. Other similar illustrations may be given. Many have been warned of their danger in staying away from God, and have either made light of the warning or have become angry at those who brought the message to them. Note the wickedness of those who wished to put Jeremiah to death when he had spoken God's words to them.

Declared not guilty. Picture the scene of the trial. It was held at one of the city gates. The princes were there representing the king, and the elders of the land representing the people. The priests and false prophets were there to bring the accusation against the prophet. Jeremiah, the true man of God, was there to hear the charges against him and to answer them. We can almost see this dignified, sober, confident servant of the Lord as he tells them that he had simply delivered the message God had given him for the nation. We are called upon to stand by what is right. Do we do it? The court declared the prophet not guilty.

LESSON VII

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Aug. 7.—The book read.—Jer. 36: 1-8. Tu.—The effect.—Jer. 36: 9-19. Wed.—The book burned.—Jer. 36: 20-26. Th.—The book restored.—Jer. 36: 27-32. Fr.—My word not void.—Isa. 55: 1-13. Sat.—The law magnified.—2 Kings 22: 1-13. Su.—Thy word have I laid up in my heart.—Psa. 119: 1-16.

JEHOIAKIM BURNS THE PROPHET'S BOOK.—Jer. 36: 1-32. Print 36: 20-32.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 23, 24)

SUPT.—20. And they went in to the king into the court, but they laid up the roll in the chamber of E-li'sha-ma the scribe, and told all the words in the ears of the king.

School. 21 So the king sent Je-hu'di to fetch the roll: and he took it out of E-li'sha-ma the scribe's chamber. And Je-hu'di read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king.

22 Now the king sat in the winterhouse in the ninth month: and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him.

23 And it came to pass, that when Je-hu'di had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth.

24 Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words.

25 Nevertheless El-na'than and Del-ai'ah and Gem-a-ri'ah had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll: but he would not hear them.

26 But the king commanded Je-rah'meel the son of Ham'me-lech and Se-rai'ah the son of Az'ri-el, and Shel-e-mi'ah the son of Ab'deel, to take Bar'uch the scribe and Jer-e-mi'ah the prophet: but the Lord hid them.

27 Then the word of the Lord came to Jer-e-mi'ah, after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Bar'uch wrote at the mouth of Jer-e-mi'ah, saying,

28 Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Je-hoi'a-kim the king of Ju'dah hath burned.

29 And thou shalt say to Je-hoi'a-kim king of Ju'dah, Thus saith the Lord; Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Bab'y-lon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast?

30 Therefore thus saith the Lord of Je-hoi'a-kim king of Ju'dah; He shall have none to sit upon the throne of Da'vid: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost.

31 And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Je-ru-sa-lem, and upon the men of Ju'dah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not.

32 Then took Jer-e-mi'ah another roll, and gave it to Bar'uch the scribe, the son of Ne-ri'ah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jer-e-mi'ah all the words of the book which Je-hoi'a-kim king of Ju'dah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words.

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20 And they went in to the king into the court; but they had laid up the roll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe; and they told all the words in the ears of the king. 21 So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll; and he took it out of the chamber of Elishama the scribe. And Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes that stood beside the king. 22 Now the king was sitting in the winter-house in the ninth month; and there was a fire in the brazier burning before him. 23 And it came to pass, when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, that the king cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was in the brazier, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was in the brazier. 24 And they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words. 25 Moreover Elnathan and Delalah and Gemariah had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll; but he would not hear them. 26 And the king commanded Jerahmeel the king's son, and Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shemaiah the son of Abdeel, to take Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet; but Jehovah hid them.

27 Then the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah, after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying, 28 Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned. 29 And thou shalt say, Thus saith Jehovah: Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast? 30 Therefore thus saith Jehovah concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah: he shall have none to sit upon the throne of David; and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. 31 And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them, but they hearkened not. 32 Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah, who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire; and there were added besides unto them many like words.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—The word of our God shall stand for ever. Isa. 40: 8.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—We may reject God's word, but it will still condemn us.

TOPIC.—Divine deliverance despised.

OUTLINE.—I. Jeremiah's prophecy written and read. II. The prophecy read before the king and destroyed by him. III. The prophecy restored.

TIME.—About B. C. 605.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

INTRODUCTION.—Thus far in the book of Jeremiah the predictions of that prophet concerning Judah, Israel and other nations have been given. Beginning with the chapter which forms the present lesson, nine chapters are taken up with a connected history of events pertaining to the kingdom of Judah. Jehoiakim commenced to reign B. C. 608, and it is believed

by many writers that about three years later Jerusalem was overcome by Nebuchadnezzar, and many Jews were taken in captivity to Babylon. Jehoiakim himself was placed in chains to be taken to Babylon, but for some reason, perhaps because of his full submission to Nebuchadnezzar, he was permitted to continue upon the throne. Thus the events of the present lesson are placed after the first captivity of Judah.

COMMENTARY.—I. JEREMIAH'S PROPHECY WRITTEN AND READ (VS. 1-19). Jeremiah had been exercising his prophetic office for twenty-three years when the Lord's command came to him in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (v. 1) to write in one roll all the prophecies which he had uttered from time to time. The divine purpose of this was that they might be read to the people of Judah (v. 6) to constrain them to humble themselves before the Lord,

that his judgments might be averted (v. 7). The occasion chosen for reading was a day that had been set apart as a day of fasting, possibly the anniversary of the first captivity of Judah which had taken place the previous year, when many Jews from a distance would be present at Jerusalem (v. 6). The prophet himself, probably through the command of Jehoiakim, was not permitted to attend the house of the Lord (v. 5), hence Baruch, the scribe, who had written the words at Jeremiah's dictation, was authorized by the prophet to read the roll publicly. This was done in the ninth month of the fifth year of Jehoiakim's reign, and the hearers were deeply moved by the prophet's words. Michaiah, the grandson of Shaphan, who was Josiah's secretary of state, hastened to the princes of Judah to tell them of the words that Baruch had read (v. 12). The princes were not satisfied with a simple report, but sent for Baruch and the roll that they also might hear it read. The message was of such deep significance, that they decided that the king must hear it, and after satisfying themselves that Baruch had actually written it down as Jeremiah had dictated it to him, they commanded that both the scribe and the prophet should hide themselves, lest harm should come to them when the king came to know the prophet's words.

II. THE PROPHECY READ BEFORE THE KING AND DESTROYED BY HIM (vs. 20-26). **20. into the court**—Where the king's apartments were. **laid up the roll**—It was placed for safe-keeping with other records. They may have feared that the king would order its destruction. **chamber of Elishama the scribe**—There were chambers in the king's palace about the court as at the temple. One of these was used by Elishama, the king's secretary, for the public records. **told all the words**—The prophet's words seemed to the princes to be of the highest importance and they believed the king should hear them because he was deeply involved in the judgments pronounced. **21. sent Jehudi**—Jehudi was a man of noble family, but occupied the position of a subordinate officer. **to fetch the roll**—The king was sufficiently interested in the message to desire to hear the reading of the roll. **Jehudi read it**—It was customary for kings to have a scribe, or secretary, to do their reading and writing for them. **stood beside the king**—The princes assumed the attitude of servants, who were accustomed to stand while the king or master sat. **22. in the winterhouse**—Such language is easily understood by an Oriental. In common parlance the lower departments are simply "the house;" the upper is "the summer house." Every respectable dwelling has both. If these are on the same story, then the external and airy apartment is the summer house, and that for winter is the interior and more sheltered room. It is rare to find a family which has an entirely separate dwelling for summer.—*Thomson*. **ninth month**—Which corresponds to our December. It was the ninth month of the ecclesiastical year which began with the month Abib, our March or April. The weather is cold enough in Palestine at that season of the year to require artificial heat. **hearth**—"Brazier."—*R. V.* There are no hearths or chimneys in Oriental houses. Firepans, filled with glowing charcoal, are placed in a depression of the floor to furnish warmth for the occupants of the room.

23. three or four leaves—The roll from which Jehudi read was made of parchment composed of several prepared skins sewed together, making a long strip. Rollers were attached, usually one at each end, and as the roll was read it was unwound from one roller, and rolled upon the other.

The writing was in columns parallel with the rolls. The leaves were pages, literally, columns. **he cut it with the penknife**—King Jehoiakim cut off with the scribe's knife the sections of the parchment that had been read. The knife was ordinarily used to repair the reed of which the pen was made. This act of the king shows his hasty temper and moral weakness. **all the roll was consumed**—It appears that Jehoiakim heard the reading of the roll to the end. **24. not afraid**—Very different from this was the conduct of Josiah upon the discovery of the law of the Lord (2 Chron. 34:19). Jehoiakim considered himself above the direction or reproof of Jehovah. The king's personal attendants shared their master's contempt for the prophet's message. They appeared to think that by destroying the roll they would render the judgments contained therein ineffective, but the burning of the roll would not destroy the word of God, nor would shutting their eyes "ward off the lightning of Jehovah's anger." **25. made intercession**—The princes were wiser than the king and wished to prevent the destruction of the precious roll. **would not hear**—The insane rage of the king is brought out into a stronger light by the counter requests of the scribes.—*Whedon*. As he threw the torn fragments of the roll on the fire, he threw there, in symbol, his royal house, his doomed city, the temple, and all the people of the land.—*Sp. Com.* **26. king commanded... to take Baruch... and Jeremiah**—Not content with destroying the roll he was eager to destroy the prophet and the scribe. His folly was as great as his anger. **the Lord hid them**—They had hidden themselves (v. 19) and the Lord kept their pursuers from discovering their hiding-places.

III. THE PROPHECY RESTORED (vs. 27-32). **27. the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah**—The king's servants could not find the prophet, but he was within hearing distance of the Lord all the while. **28. another roll**—The entire book was rewritten, and this second manuscript, so far as we can know now, is the one we have today.—*Stanley*. "Jehoiakim had burned only the parchment; he could not burn God's condemnation of him." **29. thou hast burned this roll**—The king's sin is charged directly home upon him. In attempting to put away God's words, he brought down upon himself still severer judgments. **why hast thou written**—As if the words had proceeded merely from Jeremiah and not from God himself. **the king of Babylon shall... destroy this land**—He had already come and made the nation tributary as a judgment from God, and he would come again unless the nation would humble themselves. This they did not do and the prophecy was fulfilled within a few years. **30. none to sit upon the throne**—His son Jehoiachin attempted to reign for three months, but the kingdom was occupied by the army of Nebuchadnezzar, and he was taken to Babylon. His reign was too trivial to be taken into account. **dead body shall be cast out**—The prophecy is given in greater detail in chapter 22:18, 19. **31. I will punish him**—He was slain and his kingdom destroyed.

QUESTIONS.—When did Jehoiakim reign? Where? What was his character? When did Jeremiah prophesy? Who was the ruler in Babylon at this time? Who was Baruch? To whom did he read Jeremiah's prophecies? What did Michaiah do? What did the princes do when they heard the prophecies? How was the king affected by the reading of the roll? Whom did he wish to kill? Why? How were the prophecies restored? What severe judgments were pronounced upon Jehoiakim?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. This lesson as related to the preceding one. (1) The time. (2) The condition of the nation. (3) The king. (4) The prophet. 2. A beginning of the Babylonish supremacy over Judah was made a year before. 3. Jeremiah had been prophesying for twenty-three years. 4. The value of God's word and the duty to respect it.

II. THEME.—Reverence for God's word.

III. THE MESSAGE SENT FROM GOD.—1. Jeremiah was in a position to hear the voice of God. 2. His loyalty to God and to his nation. 3. The need of a message to Judah. 4. A study of Baruch. (1) A scribe. (2) Capable. (3) Devoted. 5. The message was comprehensive. 6. The impending doom of Judah was foretold. 7. The purpose of the message was to lead the nation to repentance. 8. The prophet was forbidden to go to the temple. 9. The occasion upon which the message was read. 10. The effect upon the hearers. 11. The call for the message by the princes. 12. The message which God has given to us.

IV. THE MESSAGE REJECTED.—1. The bringing of the message to Jehoiakim, the king. 2. The character of the king. 3. Persons present as the king heard the message read. 4. The king's act of destroying the roll. (1) The folly of it. (2) The wickedness. (3) The example. (4) The purpose. 5. The word of God is rejected to-day. (1) By those who call it untrue. (2) By those who neglect it. (3) By those who accept only those parts that suit their fancy. (4) By those who disobey its teachings. 6. The attempt to arrest Jeremiah and Baruch and the failure. 7. The course of Josiah upon finding God's law compared with that of Jehoiakim upon hearing the prophecy.

V. THE MESSAGE RENEWED AND ENLARGED.—1. Jehoiakim's destruction of the roll did not destroy the bearing of its contents upon him. 2. He had added another sin to those already upon him. 3. The new message to the prophet. 4. The king's question as to why the prophet had written as he had. 5. The judgments pronounced upon Jehoiakim. (1) His posterity should not occupy the throne of Judah. (2) His death would not be mourned. (3) The nation should be rooted out. 6. No one can reject and dishonor God's word with impunity. His judgments will be multiplied.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Divine deliverance despised.

I. In seeking to forbid prophecy.

II. In the rejection of God's word.

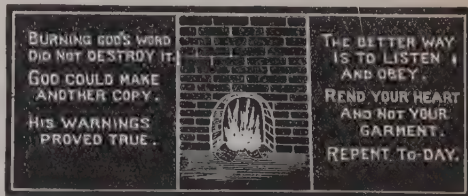
I. In seeking to forbid prophecy. Jeremiah's age was one of great political troubles, an age of moral corruption, yet an age of signal religious privilege. The great heart of God was displeased with sin, but longed to show mercy to the sinner. The hindrances to righteousness were not with him, but with the ever-weakening nation. Jehoiakim and his people were the more abandoned to sin because of their persistent turning away from their religious education and the good example of King Josiah. They were the more depraved for ignoring his precepts and example. Jeremiah the prophet was at this time under restraint, forbidden by Jehoiakim to exercise his prophetic power, or even to be present at the services of the temple. Jehoiakim was ripening fast for ruin when he thus silenced God's faithful messenger. As his heart hardened in sin there was a growing unwillingness to listen to the voice of God. Jehoiakim and his

people had been deliberately disobeying God in spite of the warnings of Jeremiah. Jehoiakim did not become a determined rebel against God all at once. He had continued to slight and pour contempt upon the threatenings of God, and thus the more increased his own condemnation. He could not shift his responsibility by simply ignoring it. His sins persisted in brought sorrow and reverses and the test was at hand whether he would now turn to God or away from him.

II. In the rejection of God's word. The last days of the kingdom of Judah had come. Two rival nations were seeking her alliance, each as a protection against the other. It was a great fast-day, a national humiliation on account of the national distress. Fasting without prayer and repentance avail nothing. It was hopeless for a nation whose prosperity, politically, as well as spiritually, depended upon their obedience to God, to rise in any degree in their own strength, while they resisted every call of God to depend upon him. Twenty-three years Jeremiah had faithfully spoken God's messages of warning and entreaty, and still in his retirement his soul was burdened for his people. He still lived where he could get divine direction as to duty. He was directed to make known God's care to Judah on a day when they were assembled in all human weakness, yet in all human self-sufficiency, to observe a great fast. The object of the special message was one of compassion and pity on the part of Jehovah. In the midst of wrath God remembered mercy. It was God's final word to the king and to the people. It was a summing up of all his former pleadings and warnings in one great call to repentance with the promise of pardon. Jeremiah beheld the whole landscape of truth outspread before him. His ministry among the people had been to speak God's word, which could not be easily forgotten. Although his message contained denunciation and warning, terms of peace were included. On their first hearing the princes seemed favorable to the prophet and to the word of God, but they feared the king. Jehoiakim was so unwilling to hear anything unpleasant or disagreeable about himself that he fell into anger before he actually knew all the message contained. The words of the roll were intended to produce penitence and result in forgiveness. They revealed Jehoiakim's character in its true light and set in array the judgments for sin which were gathering about him. He openly displayed his impatience at reproof, his indignation at Baruch and Jeremiah, and his obstinate resolution never to comply with the designs and intentions of the warnings given him. He and his princes mocked at the message of God, despised his gracious warnings, and determined to afflict the prophet and scribe who were concerned for their deliverance. The Judge of all the earth will act, not on man's view of things but on his own. Jehoiakim did not destroy revelation when he destroyed the roll on which was written God's word.

T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise



Practical Applications

"The king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll" (v. 21). King though he was, the roll did not belong to him. Though monarch of earth he had no authority over the inspired word of heaven. We have no right to destroy what does not belong to us because it is odious to us. "When Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it" (v. 23). Jehoiakim ignored facts. This is the way of fools. They "despise wisdom" (Prov. 1: 7). As Wayland Hoyt says, it was a fact that: 1. Jehoiakim had sinned. 2. Jeremiah was God's prophet. 3. God, by Jeremiah, had spoken doom against the sin of Jehoiakim unless he repented.

"He cut it with the penknife" (v. 23). In open defiance he cut the roll and burned it. It was the extreme of disobedience. The Rechabites represent the height of obedience (Jer. 35: 6-10). Jehoiakim represents the depth of disobedience. Few climb so high as they; few sink so low as he. Thousands obey many Bible precepts who cut out commands which seem unnecessary or repugnant. Piece by piece he cut the roll and burned it. He persisted in the face of remonstrance.

"The king commanded.... to take Baruch.... and Jeremiah.... but the Lord hid them" (v. 26). The king persecuted those who gave the word. The holy prophets were loyal and faithful. Our lesson is not only a warning to bad men how they touch God's word and God's prophets, but a comfort to good men to remember that their life is "hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3: 3). No enemy can find him whom God hides. The "secret" place is a safe place (Psa. 91: 1). In the second century they brought a martyr before a king, who demanded that he give up Christ. The man spurned the proposition. The king said, "If you do not, I will banish you." The man, smiling, answered, "You can not banish me from Christ; he will never leave me nor forsake me." The king angrily said, "I will confiscate your property and take it from you." The man replied, "My treasures are laid up on high; you can not get them." The king still more angrily said, "I will kill you." "Why," the man answered, "I have been dead forty years; I have been dead with Christ; dead to the world; my life is hid with Christ in God, and you can not touch it." "The righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God" (Eccl. 9: 1), and this is a safe place.

"Thus saith the Lord of Jehoiakim" (v. 30). Jehoiakim injured himself. The roll could not feel. The truth could not be destroyed. But the king suffered. The roll contained the only available remedy for the preservation of himself and his kingdom. God's design in its writing was their salvation. The Bible is written for the good of the worst of men. He who rejects it but blots his own name out of the book of life.

Jeremiah took another roll (v. 32). The roll might be burned, but the truth could not be destroyed nor suppressed. The roll was rewritten and enlarged. The burning of the first but advertised the second. A gentleman on the street was offered a tract. He took it, saying, "I shall burn it as soon as I go home." He kept his word, throwing it into the fire and watching it burn. As the thin paper curled up with the heat his eyes caught the sentence, "The word of our God shall stand for ever" (Isa. 40: 8), and he could not rid himself of the words. They buzzed in his ear; they stood out boldly on the pages of the ledger; they haunted him and made him miserable, until, unable to bear it any longer, he went to the mission hall, and there, finding salvation, learned to rejoice that the word of the Lord did live forever.

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—Those who reject God's word suffer punishment.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

JEREMIAH
BARUCH

FAITHFUL

GOD'S WORD
JEHOIAKIMREJECTED BY JEHOIAKIM
THE LORD

A faithful prophet. Review the preceding lesson, which centers almost wholly about Jeremiah. Although he was hated by the rebellious and idolatrous king and his counselors, yet he continued to deliver the messages which God gave him for them. Relate the incident of the placing of Jehoiakim in fetters by Nebuchadnezzar, and the carrying away to Babylon of much treasure and many captives from Jerusalem. This took place about a year before the events of the present lesson. Recall the faithfulness of the prophet Elijah who carried a stern message to Ahab, and of the prophet Daniel who would not cease praying to the true God, even though the decree had gone forth that whoever should pray to any one besides the king should be cast into the den of lions. The last lesson of this quarter is the story of Daniel. Jeremiah was a true servant of the Lord.

A devoted scribe. Explain to the children that a scribe was one who read and wrote. In the time of which we now study there were not many who could do this. Some kings had to have scribes to do their reading and writing for them, because they could not read or write. Tell the class that the Lord commanded Jeremiah to write in a roll all the prophecies which he had uttered, and that Baruch wrote the words as the prophet spoke them. Describe the roll of parchment upon which the prophecies were written, and the reading of the words in the house of the Lord. As the king hated Jeremiah for the prophecies he uttered, so he hated Baruch who wrote them and read them to the people. This scribe was a man who feared God. Show in how great danger these faithful men were, since they had to hide lest the king should find them and put them to death.

A king burning God's word. Give a word-picture of Jehoiakim and his personal attendants gathered in his winter-house about a brazier while Jehudi read to them from Jeremiah's roll. What is it that makes the fire shoot forth in flame? The king has cut off a part of the roll with his penknife and thrown it upon the coals. He was angry at the words and thought he would destroy them by burning the roll. Show that many people to-day are doing much the same as Jehoiakim did, when they neglect the Bible and do not obey its teachings. Teach the lesson of reverence for God's word.

A king rejected by the Lord. F. B. Meyer says, "The drunken captain may cut in pieces the chart that tells of the rocks in the vessel's course, and put in irons the sailor who calls his attention to it, but neither will avert the crash that must ensue unless the helm is turned." Tell the class that the Lord in great kindness had sent his word to King Jehoiakim to warn him of the destruction that was sure to come unless he and his people would humble themselves. Enumerate the evils that were declared by the prophet as about to fall upon the king.

LESSON VIII

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Aug. 14.—Cast into prison.—Jer. 37:1-21. Tu.—In the dungeon.—Jer. 38:1-13. Wed.—Secret counsel.—Jer. 38:14-23. Th.—Mocked God's messengers.—2 Chron. 36:11-21. Fr.—Heroes of faith.—Heb. 11:32-40. Sat.—"I have fought a good fight."—2 Tim. 4:1-18. Su.—Faithful unto death.—Rev. 2:8-11.

JEREMIAH CAST INTO PRISON.—Jer. 37: 1-21. Print 37: 4-21.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verse 15)

SUPT.—4 Now Jer-e-mi'ah came in and went out among the people: for they had not put him into prison.

School.—5 Then Phar'ao'h's army was come forth out of E'gypt: and when the Chal-de'ans that besieged Je-ru'sa-lem heard tidings of them, they departed from Je-ru'sa-lem.

6 Then came the word of the Lord unto the prophet Jer-e-mi'ah, saying,

7 Thus saith the Lord, the God of Is'ra-el; Thus shall ye say to the king of Ju'dah, that sent you unto me to enquire of me; Behold, Phar'ao'h's army, which is come forth to help you, shall return to E'gypt into their own land.

8 And the Chal-de'ans shall come again, and fight against this city, and take it, and burn it with fire.

9 Thus saith the Lord; Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chal-de'ans shall surely depart from us: for they shall not depart.

10 For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chal-de'ans that fight against you, and there remained but wounded men among them, yet should they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire.

11 And it came to pass, that when the army of the Chal-de'ans was broken up from Je-ru'sa-lem for fear of Phar'ao'h's army,

12 Then Jer-e-mi'ah went forth out of Je-ru'sa-lem to go into the land of Ben'ja-min to separate himself thence in the midst of the people.

13 And when he was in the gate of Ben'ja-min, a captain of the ward was there, whose name was I-ri'jah, the son of Shel-e-mi'ah, the son of Han-a-ni'ah; and he took Jer-e-mi'ah the prophet, saying, Thou fastest away to the Chal-de'ans.

14 Then said Jer-e-mi'ah, It is false; I fall not away to the Chal-de'ans. But he hearkened not to him: so I-ri'jah took Jer-e-mi'ah, and brought him to the princes.

15 Wherefore the princes were wroth with Jer-e-mi'ah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jon'a-than the scribe: for they had made that the prison.

16 When Jer-e-mi'ah was entered into the dungeon, and into the cabins, and Jer-e-mi'ah had remained there many days;

17 Then Zed-e-ki'ah the king sent, and took him out: and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said, Is there any word from the Lord? And Jer-e-mi'ah said, There is: for, said he, thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Bab'y-lon.

18 Moreover Jer-e-mi'ah said unto king Zed-e-ki'ah, What have I offended against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that ye have put me in prison?

19 Where are now your prophets which prophesied unto you, saying, The king of Bab'y-lon shall not come against you, nor against this land?

20 Therefore hear now, I pray thee, O my lord the king: let my supplication, I pray thee, be accepted before thee; that thou cause me not to return to the house of Jon'a-than the scribe, lest I die there.

21 Then Zed-e-ki'ah the king commanded that they should commit Jer-e-mi'ah unto the court of the prison, and that they should give him daily a piece of bread out of the bakers' street, until all the bread in the city were spent. Thus Jer-e-mi'ah remained in the court of the prison.

*AMERICAN REVISION

4 Now Jeremiah came in and went out among the people; for they had not put him into prison. 5 And Pharaoh's army was come forth out of Egypt; and when the Chaldeans that were besieging Jerusalem heard tidings of them, they brake up from Jerusalem.

6 Then came the word of Jehovah unto the prophet Jeremiah, saying, 7 Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Thus shall ye say to the king of Judah, that sent you unto me to inquire of me: Behold, Pharaoh's army, which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land. 8 And the Chaldeans shall come again, and fight against this city; and they shall take it, and burn it with fire. 9 Thus saith Jehovah, Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us; for they shall not depart. 10 For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained but wounded men among them, yet would they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire.

11 And it came to pass that, when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army, 12 then Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin, to receive his portion there, in the midst of the people. 13 And when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the ward was there, whose name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah; and he laid hold on Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou art falling away to the Chaldeans. 14 Then said Jeremiah, It is false; I am not falling away to the Chaldeans. But he hearkened not to him; so Irijah laid hold on Jeremiah, and brought him to the princes. 15 And the princes were wroth with Jeremiah and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe; for they had made that the prison.

16 When Jeremiah was come into the dungeon-house, and into the cells, and Jeremiah had remained there many days; 17 then Zedekiah the king sent, and fetched him; and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said, Is there any word from Jehovah? And Jeremiah said, There is. He said also, Thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon. 18 Moreover Jeremiah said unto king Zedekiah, Wherein have I sinned against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that ye have put me in prison? 19 Where now are your prophets that prophesied unto you, saying, The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this land? 20 And now hear, I pray thee, O my lord the king; let my supplication, I pray thee, be presented before thee, that thou cause me not to return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there. 21 Then Zedekiah the king commanded, and they committed Jeremiah into the court of the guard; and they gave him daily a loaf of bread out of the bakers' street, until all the bread in the city was spent. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Matt. 5:11.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—Those who are true to God may expect persecution.

TOPIC.—God's constancy to Judah.

OUTLINE.—I. Jeremiah's message to Judah. II.

Jeremiah unjustly imprisoned. III. Jeremiah favored by Zedekiah.

TIME.—About B. C. 588.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

INTRODUCTION.—The first captivity of Judah, which marks the beginning of the seventy years' cap-

tivity foretold by the prophets, began in B. C. 606, just before the events of the preceding lesson. Jehoiachin attempted to rule as his father's successor, but held sway only three months. In that time he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, and by that monarch was taken as a captive to Babylon with ten thousand of the noblest people of Judah. Jehoiachin was held a prisoner for thirty-seven years, when he was released by Evil-merodach, king of Babylon. Zedekiah, a brother of Jehoiachin, was made king of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar, and had been reigning about nine years at the time of the events of this lesson.

COMMENTARY.—**I. JEREMIAH'S MESSAGE TO JUDAH** (vs. 1-10). **1-3.** The reign of Zedekiah, a son of the faithful and devoted King Josiah, was destined to mark the darkest hours of the kingdom of Judah. But two years remained before it was to fall utterly. The record of Zedekiah's character is, "He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that Jehoiakim had done" (2 Kings 24:19). He was subject to Nebuchadnezzar (also called Nebuchadrezzar), who had placed him upon the throne. The messages which God had sent to the people had been ignored, and times of distress were about to come upon the nation. It seems, however, that Zedekiah still had respect for Jeremiah, the prophet of the Lord, for he sent men to him with the request, "Pray now unto the Lord our God for us." There seemed to be a hope that as in the time of Sennacherib's invasion, when Hezekiah was king (2 Kings 19:35), there might now be given in answer to prayer a miraculous overthrow of the invading host.—*Cam. Bible.* **4. came in and went out**—The prophet was hated, yet no charge sufficient to condemn him to imprisonment had been proved against him, and he was allowed the liberty accorded to others in the city. **5. Pharaoh's army**—It had come as an ally of Judah against the Chaldeans. **the Chaldeans...departed**—When the besieging army knew of the approach of the Egyptian army, they withdrew from Jerusalem to meet the enemy.

7. thus saith the Lord—Jeremiah spoke with the confidence of a clear knowledge of what the Lord said. Hope had come to the Jews that the Chaldeans had gone from Jerusalem to return no more, but a message came from God that they would return, and would destroy the city. **the king of Judah—Zedekiah. Pharaoh's army**—It was Pharaoh-Hophra, who was then ruler of Egypt, that commanded the army. **8. take it, and burn it with fire**—The language is clear and strong. The prophet was declaring the utter desolation of his own city, and his own heart must have been pained at the prospect. **9. deceive not yourselves**—Both king and people had set at naught the law of God, and they also set at naught the messages sent to them by the Lord through his servant. They tried to believe that the prophet's words were untrue and that the city would be spared. **10. there remained but wounded men**—Our version fails to give the full force of the Hebrew, which is that even though but a few individuals remained, and those severely wounded (literally, transfigured), they would be more than a match for the Jews. So certainly was it God's purpose that Jerusalem should be overthrown.—*Streane.* **this city—Jerusalem.**

II. JEREMIAH UNJUSTLY IMPRISONED (vs. 11-15). **11. was broken up**—The camp of the Chaldeans was broken up, and the army had moved toward the Egyptian army. The siege was raised temporarily. **12. Jeremiah went forth**—The confinement in the besieged city had caused suffering and it is but natural to suppose that, since the enemy had gone, the people would rush out of the city to secure provisions, which had become scarce,

and to prepare for a further siege. **land of Benjamin—Anathoth, Jeremiah's native town, was in Benjamin. to separate himself**—"To receive his portion."—*R. V.* The meaning appears to be that the prophet went to Anathoth to collect whatever would be due him from the land in which he had an interest, either as a member of the tribe of Levi or by personal ownership. **in the midst of the people**—Jeremiah did not leave the city secretly, but with the crowd of people who hastened to escape from the place of their imprisonment. **13. took Jeremiah**—Placed him under arrest. **thou fallest away to the Chaldeans**—Because the prophet had predicted that Jerusalem should be destroyed by the Chaldeans, those who hated him concluded that he was in league with the Chaldeans, and hence treated him as a traitor. **14. it is false**—A direct denial of the charge. **he hearkened not—Irijah made this charge a pretext for placing Jeremiah in prison.** **15. the princes were wroth with Jeremiah**—These were not the men who had twice before espoused the cause of Jeremiah (chapters 26 and 36). Probably those had been carried away with Jeconiah, and their places were now filled by men less worthy.—*Whedon.* **put him in prison**—Persecution has ever been the argument of wicked men against God's truth. These persecutors vainly thought that by shutting up the prophet they would make his words untrue. **had made that the prison**—The Eastern prisons are not public buildings erected for that purpose, but a part of the house in which the criminal judges dwell.—*Cheyne.*

III. JEREMIAH FAVORED BY ZEDEKIAH (vs. 16-21). **16. dungeon...cabins**—The Revised Version uses the terms "dungeon-house" and "cells." Jeremiah's imprisonment was of a rigorous sort, being confined in a cell or vault, opening off an underground passage, where there was "little light and less ventilation." **many days**—Until the siege had been renewed by the Chaldeans, and conditions in the city were alarming. **17. asked him secretly**—The king was afraid to have the princes know that he placed any confidence in Jeremiah. **word from the Lord**—In his distress the king thought of Jehovah, and looked toward him as a last resort. **there is**—The Lord had spoken, but the word was the same that had already been given: The nation should be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon. The only hope lay in repentance, and obedience to God. **18. wherein have I sinned against thee** (*R. V.*)—The prophet demanded an explanation of the cruel punishment inflicted upon him. **19. where are now your prophets**—Zedekiah and the princes should already have been convinced of the integrity of Jeremiah and the baseness of the false prophets, and now they were called upon to acknowledge the faithfulness of Jeremiah. **20. let my supplication...be accepted**—The prophet's request was entirely reasonable. The conditions were so uncomfortable and unhealthy in the dungeon in Jonathan's house that one could not long survive there.

QUESTIONS.—Who was Zedekiah and how came he to be king? What was his character? Whom did he ask to pray for him and why? How was the siege of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans interrupted? What message did Jeremiah bring to the king from the Lord? What accusation was brought against the prophet by a captain of the ward? What was done with Jeremiah as a result of this charge? Describe the interview of the king with the prophet? What plea did the prophet make for himself? What privileges were given to Jeremiah?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. Jehoiakim's destruction of the prophet's roll. (1) His purpose in the deed. (2) Lessons to be drawn from it. 2. The reign of Jehoiachin. (1) His ancestry. (2) His character. (3) His captivity. 3. The first captivity of Judah in B. C. 606, the second in B. C. 598. 4. The final and complete captivity of the nation and the destruction of Jerusalem were near at hand.

II. THEME.—The children of God are subject to persecution.

III. JERUSALEM BESIEGED.—1. The Chaldeans sent the besieging army. 2. The cause of the siege was that Zedekiah, whom Nebuchadnezzar had made king of Judah, had rebelled against him. 3. The approach of the army of Egypt which had come as an ally of Judah against Babylon. 4. The siege raised temporarily while the Chaldeans turned the Egyptian army homeward. 5. The siege renewed later. 6. The siege was to continue a year or two longer.

IV. JEREMIAH'S MESSAGE.—1. A faithful prophet in the time of Judah's distress. 2. Zedekiah's request of Jeremiah for prayer. 3. The feeling of relief and security when the Chaldeans left Jerusalem for a time. 4. The word of the Lord by Jeremiah at this time. (1) The certainty of the destruction of the city. (2) The inability of the Jews to defend themselves. (3) The tendency of the king and princes to reject the prophet's words.

V. THE PROPHET PERSECUTED.—1. The reason why the princes of Judah hated Jeremiah. 2. The occasion which was the basis of the accusation. 3. The punishment inflicted. 4. Persecution is the heritage of God's people. 5. The kingdom of darkness eternally opposed to the kingdom of light.

VI. JEREMIAH FAVORED.—1. Zedekiah in deep distress seeks the prophet's help, but secretly for fear of his reputation with the princes. 2. Jeremiah in the face of death declares the same message with characteristic faithfulness. 3. The renewed siege had shown that the prophets who had declared that the Chaldeans would not return were false prophets. 4. Jeremiah's plea not to be confined longer in the dungeon-house of Jonadab. 5. Improved provision for the prophet. 6. A view of Jeremiah's character.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—God's constancy to Judah.

I. Evidenced through prophetic messages.

II. Evidenced through forbearance with evil.


I. Evidenced through prophetic messages. "Deceive not yourselves." God's repeated messages to Judah were so distinct and unmistakable that no excuse for ignorance could be offered. Any hope they might have of evading God's word was only deceptive. Had the nation been obedient, instead of having invasions and oppression, it would have had increasing peace and would have abounded in moral and religious excellence. Self-deception was no protection to Judah. Retribution was the natural consequence of their denials of truth and justice. Jeremiah's clear and undisguised declaration of God's truth under all circumstances was for Judah a most forceful proof of God's great concern for the nation's welfare. He had persistently declared that the city would fall into the hands of the Chaldeans. He had advised the king and people to accept the situation quietly and surrender. He had warned them again and again that resistance was not only useless but would bring worse calamities upon them. Nevertheless Zedekiah, though a trib-

utary to the king of Babylon, had entered into a private league with Pharaoh pursuant to which, when the king of Babylon came to chastise him for his treachery, the king of Egypt sent forces toward Jerusalem to relieve it when besieged. At their approach the Chaldeans raised the siege to fight them at a distance before any Jewish forces could join them, but that was not to be looked upon by Zedekiah as their final departure from Jerusalem. He was in a difficult position and he had no strength of will or courage to cope with it. Zedekiah's weakness and vacillation, his unfaithfulness to his own best convictions, his sinful yielding to others in what he knew to be wrong, were his ruin. His faithless, unstable nature revealed itself at every turn, yet he was not without good impulses. He had some sense of his need of God's favor and of his own unworthiness to ask it for himself and yet this only added to his condemnation, for though he desired prayers he would not take good counsel, though it came from God. "Word from the Lord." Zedekiah's question was right. His manner was reverent, but he did not have the spirit of obedience to the word of God. He vainly clung to the hope that the word of God would be altered though he and his people had not altered their lives. Zedekiah would not act upon the instruction given him. His bitter torment afterward in all his sufferings was in the memory that he might have escaped it all if he had given heed to God through his prophet's message and advice.

II. Evidenced through forbearance with evil. God came near to his people through the presence of his prophet among them. He delayed judgment. His mercy became to them a fact as well as his justice. He revealed his grace in the promises of pardon to the penitent. His love was made known through his appeals for their return to him. Jehoiakim had destroyed and burned the parchment roll on which the divine message was written, and now under Zedekiah the princes dared to lay hands upon Jeremiah and thrust him into prison without trial. The times were critical and suspicions were rife on every hand. The people were irritated by the prophecies of Jeremiah. They determined to keep him a prisoner. He was charged with treason by the captain, and the princes were willing to believe that the charge was true. They were not so concerned about his going to the Chaldeans as they were eager to find occasion to persecute him. It seemed that such procedure was beyond the forbearance of God. But Jeremiah could be trusted to suffer for the truth's sake, which was a powerful testimony thereto, and God provided a way of escape. The king sent for Jeremiah and gave him private audience as an ambassador from God. This was a triumph for Jeremiah and a humiliation for the king. In his inmost soul he believed Jeremiah to be God's prophet. When Jeremiah delivered God's message once more to the king he spoke with freedom. His honest reproof, in the end, gained him favor with the king in spite of the opposition against him.

T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

<p>A PRISON MAY PROVE GRANDER THAN A PALACE.</p> <p>PETER, PAUL, BUNYAN, WERE WITNESSES.</p>	<p>THE WORD OF GOD IS NOT SOUND.</p> 	<p>PRISON MIRE DOES NOT DETILE THE SOUL.</p> <p>THE MIRE OF SIN IS DEFILING TO SOUL AND BODY.</p> <p>BE TRUE.</p>
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Practical Applications

God permits suffering. 1. That we may learn. "The princes were wroth with Jeremiah . . . and put him in prison" (v. 15). The psalmist acknowledged, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes" (Psa. 119:71). If the Captain of our salvation was made "perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2:10), can you and I obtain perfection in any other way? God can teach us faith by sending us difficulties. Out of an experience David could say, "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine" (1 Sam. 17:37). God can only develop patience by permitting tribulation to come to us (Rom. 5:3). 2. That God may be glorified in our deliverance. Again and again was Jeremiah thrust into prison, but God's promise to him, "They shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee" (Jer. 1:19), was fulfilled. The three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace (Dan. 3:25), and Paul and Silas with their feet fast in the stocks (Acts 16:24) were opportunities for the manifestation of the power of God to deliver. 3. That God may use us. Persecution is a bell that rings out the virtues of Christianity. The possibility of such courage as Jeremiah showed could only be demonstrated by danger. Madam Guyon's sweetest hymn was written within prison walls. Paul's epistle to the Philippians with its many injunctions to rejoice comes home to us with a mighty power when we remember it was written in a dungeon. Livingstone's death did more for missions than he could possibly have wrought in years of labor. 4. That we may have sympathy with others. That we might have a sympathizing God, Jesus came to be a suffering Savior. "In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:18). "We can not do good to others save at a cost to ourselves, and our own afflictions are the price we pay for our own ability to sympathize."

Be true though you lose by it. Jeremiah always told the truth whatever the consequences to himself. When the king sent to consult him secretly his answer was bold and clear (v. 17). Never had he been more definite and concise. There was no equivocation or qualification. He forgot that he was a prisoner speaking to a king and only remembered that he was a prophet speaking for God. Jeremiah was one of those who "out of weakness were made strong" (Heb. 11:34). His was a gentle, timid, shrinking nature. Suffering was terrible to him. He piteously pleaded for the king's help "lest he die." Yet how strong he became under the power of God! He was not "afraid of their faces" and "not dismayed" (Jer. 1:8, 17). He "spoke all" that was commanded. Though weak and wavering naturally, you may be strong and steady spiritually. If you ask God and trust him he will do for you what he did for the prophet, make you a "defenced city, an iron pillar, and brasen walls" (Jer. 1:18).

Jeremiah put the kingdom of God first. He delivered God's message, then pleaded his own cause. He would not soften a word of the truth for any personal advantage. Abraham put God first when "he went out, not knowing whither he went," and "sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country" (Heb. 11:8, 9). He put God first when he bound Isaac his son on the altar upon the wood and stretched forth his hand to lay him (Gen. 22:9, 10).

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—The wicked often use God's people cruelly.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

JERUSALEM BESIEGED

Jeremiah { Prophesying
Imprisoned
Favored

The city besieged. Review in a few words the story of Jehoiakim burning the roll containing Jeremiah's prophecy, and give a brief account of the nation from that time until the events of the present lesson took place. Give the children an idea of what the siege of Jerusalem meant. It might be helpful to make use of the blackboard. Draw a square in which the sides would represent the walls of the city, marking gates in the walls, securely closed, and towers upon the walls for the guards. Within the walls were the Jews with the king and the prophet. About the walls was the Chaldean army to prevent food being taken in, and to capture any who might come out of the city. Explain that the besieging army planned to remain until the inhabitants of the city surrendered. Recall a former deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrians when King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah prayed.

Jeremiah's message. Note the fact that King Zedekiah requested the prophet to pray for him and the nation. Explain that the king and the princes were not willing to repent and humble themselves before the Lord, therefore the predicted destruction must come. Emphasize the fact that God is loving and merciful, and ready to pardon all who will submit to him. He would have helped Judah if they had been penitent and obedient. Even though the people did not wish to accept Jeremiah's message, yet he gave them the words which the Lord gave him. It requires courage to be a faithful follower of the Lord. Show how the prophet's faithfulness is a lesson for us.

Jeremiah in prison. Tell the story of Jeremiah's attempt to go to Anathoth, his native town, to secure some provisions for use during the siege that was soon to be renewed, and of his false arrest. Explain that it was because he would not deliver the sort of messages that the Jews wished to hear, that he was persecuted. Give a vivid picture of this holy man being placed in a dark, damp, underground cell. His enemies put him there for being faithful to God. Tell the story of Luther or Bunyan. They were each placed in prison for being faithful to God. It is far better to live a true Christian life even amid persecution than to be a sinner. Jeremiah was constantly faithful and not like the sea-captain of whom it was said that in fine weather he would stand on the deck of his boat and defy the Almighty, but when a heavy storm was raging would fall on his knees to pray.

Jeremiah favored. At last the king was anxious to know whether the Lord had spoken again, but the same message, that the city should be destroyed, was renewed. Explain to the class how the prophet was transferred from the cell in the dungeon-house to a place where he could have light and ventilation. Tell how the prophet was provided for during the siege.

LESSON IX

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Aug. 21.—Carried captive.—Jer. 39:1-18. Tu.—City captured.—Jer. 52:1-16. Wed.—Temple despoiled.—Jer. 52:17-23; 2 Kings 25:13-17. Th.—The people left.—2 Kings 25:22-26. Fr.—Ezekiel's account.—Ezek. 12:1-20. Sat.—Beauty of Israel cast down.—Lam. 2:1-10. Su.—The siege.—Lam. 4:1-16.

JUDAH CARRIED CAPTIVE TO BABYLON.—Jer. 39:1-18. Print 39:1-10.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 9, 10)

SUPT.—1 In the ninth year of Zed-e-ki'ah king of Ju'dah, in the tenth month, came Neb-u-chad-rez'zar king of Bab'y-lon and all his army against Je-ru'sa-lem, and they besieged it.

School.—2 And in the eleventh year of Zed-e-ki'ah, in the fourth month, the ninth day of the month, the city was broken up.

3 And all the princes of the king of Bab'y-lon came in, and sat in the middle gate, even Ner'gal-sha-re'zer, Sam'gar-ne'bo, Sar'se-chim, Rab'sa-ris, Ner'gal-sha-re'zer, Rab'mag, with all the residue of the princes of the king of Bab'y-lon.

4 And it came to pass, that when Zed-e-ki'ah the king of Ju'dah saw them, and all the men of war, then they fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the king's garden, by the gate betwixt the two walls: and he went out the way of the plain.

5 But the Chal-de'ans' army pursued after them, and overtook Zed-e-ki'ah in the plains of Jer'i-cho: and when they had taken him, they brought him up to Neb-u-chad-nez'zar king of Bab'y-lon to Rib'lah in the land of Ha'math, where he gave judgment upon him.

6 Then the king of Bab'y-lon slew the sons of Zed-e-ki'ah in Rib'lah before his eyes: also the king of Bab'y-lon slew all the nobles of Ju'dah.

7 Moreover he put out Zed-e-ki'ah's eyes, and bound him with chains, to carry him to Bab'y-lon.

8 And the Chal-de'ans burned the king's house, and the houses of the people, with fire, and brake down the walls of Je-ru'sa-lem.

9 Then Neb-u'zar-ad'an the captain of the guard carried away captive into Bab'y-lon the remnant of the people that remained in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to him, with the rest of the people that remained.

10 But Neb-u'zar-ad'an the captain of the guard left of the poor of the people, which had nothing, in the land of Ju'dah, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time.

*AMERICAN REVISION

And it came to pass when Jerusalem was taken 1 (in the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon and all his army against Jerusalem, and besieged it; 2 in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, the ninth day of the month, a breach was made in the city), 3 that all the princes of the king of Babylon came in, and sat in the middle gate, to wit, Nergal-sharezer, Samgar-nebo, Sarsechim, Rab-saris, Nergal-sharezer, Rab-mag, with all the rest of the princes of the king of Babylon.

4 And it came to pass that, when Zedekiah the king of Judah and all the men of war saw them, then they fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the king's garden, through the gate betwixt the two walls; and he went out toward the Arabah. 5 But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after them, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho: and when they had taken him, they brought him up to Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath; and he gave judgment upon him. 6 Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes; also the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of Judah. 7 Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon.

8 And the Chaldeans burned the king's house, and the houses of the people, with fire, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem. 9 Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive into Babylon the residue of the people that remained in the city, the deserters also that fell away to him, and the residue of the people that remained. 10 But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left of the poor of the people, that had nothing, in the land of Judah, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? **School.**—Be sure your sin will find you out. Num. 32:23.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—The persistently rebellious have no escape from the judgments of God.

TOPIC.—Closing scenes in Judah.

OUTLINE.—I. Jerusalem taken. II. Zedekiah's punishment. III. Judah taken captive. IV. Kindness to Jeremiah. V. A message to Ebed-melech.

TIME.—July, B. C. 586.

PLACES.—Jerusalem; Riblah; Babylon.

PARALLEL ACCOUNTS.—2 Kings 25:1-12; Jer. 52:1-16.

READ.—2 Kings 25; 2 Chron. 36.

INTRODUCTION.—The favor shown to Jeremiah by King Zedekiah in taking him from the dungeon and placing him in the court of the guard, was not allowed to continue without interruption. The hostility toward him on the part of the princes demanded that he be put to death (Jer. 38:4). "The removal of Jeremiah from prison to the court of the guard was of course favorable to the publication of his message, hence the princes take alarm and apply to the king for permission to put him to death. There was, no doubt, truth in their assertion that Jeremiah's words were 'weakening the hands of the men of war,' but the fact that the words which he spoke were not his own but the divine message with which he was charged, made all the difference in the case."—*Cam. Bible*. The prophet was given over by the king to the princes, who placed him

in a dungeon where he sank into the mire (Jer. 38:6). Through the kindly efforts of "Ebed-melech the Ethiopian," who presented the case before the king, Jeremiah was rescued from the dungeon in which continued confinement must soon have proved fatal. After this Zedekiah had a secret conference with the prophet to ascertain whether or not there was any hope for the besieged city. Jeremiah declared again that Jerusalem would fall into the hands of the Chaldeans, and the only hope of safety for himself, his family and the princes was to surrender to the besieging army. This the prophet urged him to do, but the king feared the Jews who had already gone over to the enemy, and feared to oppose the policy of his officers. He demanded of the prophet that he should not let it be known that he had held this interview with him. Zedekiah's fearfulness proved his destruction.

COMMENTARY.—I. JERUSALEM TAKEN (vs. 1-3). 1. **ninth year...** tenth month—it was in December, B. C. 588, that the siege commenced. The day of the month was the tenth (2 Kings 25:1; Jer. 52:4), hence the last of December, since the tenth month of the Jewish year corresponds to the latter part of December and the first part of January of our year. **all his army.**—The forms of expression in 2 Kings 25:1 and Jer. 34:1 indicate the magnitude of the besieging army. **besieged it**—The one purpose of the Chaldeans in this siege was to gain possession of Jerusalem, and their efforts were twofold. They completely surrounded

the city so that none of the inhabitants could pass out and in to supply provisions, and thus in time they would starve them into submission. In addition to this, they sought to gain an entrance into the city by battering down the walls, and by hurling missiles of various kinds to destroy those who were defending the besieged city. **2. in the eleventh year, etc.**—The siege continued one and one-half years, including the interruption occasioned by the approach of the Egyptian army, when the Chaldeans withdrew from Jerusalem for a short time. **the city was broken up**—"A breach was made in the city."—*R. V.* According to Josephus it was midnight when the walls gave way and were opened for the entrance of the Chaldeans. **3. the princes of the king**—These were the chief officers of the army. Four of these are mentioned. *Rab-saris*, meaning "chief of the eunuchs," and *Rab-mag*, "chief of the magi," are the titles of those whose names they follow. **middle gate**—This position was probably between the upper and lower parts of the city, "and those who were posted there commanded the temple and the citadel."—*Cheyne*. There may have been a consultation there to determine what course of action should follow.

II. ZEDEKIAH'S PUNISHMENT (vs. 4-7). **4. saw them**—It was night, yet the king and his men of war perceived that Jerusalem was in the hands of the enemy. **they fled... by night**—Hoping thus to escape the Chaldeans and preserve their lives. Entrance into the city had been made from the north, and the flight was toward the south. The route of the fugitives "wound down the Tyropœon valley, 'betwixt the two walls' of Moriah on his left, and Zion on his right. This path came out in 'the king's garden,' which was laid out near Siloam in the broad space formed by the junction of the Hinnom and Kidron valleys, at the southeast corner of the city."—*Peloubet*. **he went out the way of the plain**—"He went out toward the Arabah."—*R. V.* This is the depression along the Jordan and Dead Sea. It has been suggested that Zedekiah attempted to reach territory under the control of Egypt, since Egypt and Judah were allies. **5. pursued after them**—As the Chaldeans completely surrounded the city, the flight of the king and his men was naturally discovered, and the fugitive king was overtaken "in the plains of Jericho" about twelve miles from Jerusalem. **brought him... to Riblah**—King Nebuchadnezzar was at this time besieging Tyre also and had his headquarters at Riblah at the foot of Lebanon, where the great highway from the East parted into two roads, one leading to Tyre and the other to the land of Israel. From this point the king of Babylon could conveniently direct both sieges. **gave judgment upon him**—Zedekiah was put on trial as a criminal. Nebuchadnezzar did not look upon him as a king, although he had placed him upon the throne of Judah. Zedekiah had rebelled against him and he was treated as a traitor.

6. slew the sons of Zedekiah—This was the first element in the terrible punishment inflicted upon the conquered king. The anguish of the father who sees his own sons wantonly executed is indescribable. **slew all the nobles**—The second element in his punishment was to see his nobles, or princes (Jer. 52:10) slain. **7. put out Zedekiah's eyes**—The third element in his punishment was the physical torture of having his eyes thrust out, probably with a spear. Thus the last sight he was permitted to behold was the slaughter of his sons and princes, and this sight would be vividly remembered during all the subsequent years of his life. This was a common mode of punishment in

Oriental countries in all times, but too cruel to be tolerated in any age.

III. JUDAH TAKEN CAPTIVE (vs. 8-10). **8. burned the king's house**—From the accounts in 2 Kings 25 and Jer. 52 we note that there was a delay of a month after the capture of the city before the palace of the king and the other palaces of the city were destroyed. The extent of the destruction is expressed by the words: "And he burnt the house of the Lord, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire" (2 Kings 25:9). **9. Nebuzar-adan... carried away captive... the remnant**—Nebuzar-adan was the officer next to the king of Babylon and had charge of the destruction of Jerusalem and directed the taking of the Jews into captivity. His office literally signified "chief of the executioners." Jeremiah gives (52:28-30) the number taken captive at this time as seven hundred forty-five, and the total of the three captivities as four thousand six hundred. **that fell away**—"The deserters."—*R. V.* **10. left of the poor of the people**—"The wisest, wealthiest and strongest of the land" were taken to Babylon, and those who would not be likely to give that government any trouble were left in Judah. **gave them vineyards and fields**—The parallel accounts (Jer. 52:16; 2 Kings 25:12) say that they were left as vine-dressers and husbandmen. Combining the accounts then we see precisely how the matter was. They were put in charge of this kind of property, which in a sense was given to them as their own, but might be resumed at any moment by the conqueror.—*Cam. Bible*.

IV. KINDNESS TO JEREMIAH (vs. 11-14). Nebuchadnezzar doubtless knew the nature of Jeremiah's prophecies, and his counsel to the Jews to surrender to him. He therefore gave positive directions that the prophet should be treated well. He was taken in chains with the other captives as far as Ramah, where he was set free, while the rest were taken on to Riblah and thence to Babylon. He was returned to Jerusalem and dwelt among his own people who were left in Judah. The directions to Gedaliah, in whose charge the prophet was placed, were to "carry him home" (v. 14), but it is not clearly understood whether this meant Gedaliah's home, the king's house, the temple or the prophet's own home. It is most likely that he was taken to his own home, in view of the fact that the temple and the principal buildings of the city were destroyed.

V. A MESSAGE TO EBED-MELECH (vs. 15-18). Ebed-melech, the Ethiopian, stood in a peculiar position. He belonged to a nation hostile to the Chaldeans, hence the fear that the conquering army would do him harm. "This incident should in point of time be connected with the events of chapter 38. It probably was postponed till now in order that there might be no break in the narrative of Jeremiah's imprisonment and the capture of the city."—*Streane*.

QUESTIONS.—What army besieged Jerusalem? Who was king of Judah at the time? How long did the siege continue? Why did the Lord permit the kingdom of Judah to be overthrown? What course did the king of Judah take when he saw that the city was taken? Where was he captured and where was he taken for trial? What punishment was inflicted upon him and his family? What was done to the city of Jerusalem? What was done with the people of Judah? What directions were given by Nebuchadnezzar with reference to Jeremiah? What reason was there why the king of Babylon should show kindness to the prophet? What message did Jeremiah receive from the Lord for Ebed-melech?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. Trace the intervening events between the events of the preceding lesson and this. (1) The complaint of Jeremiah's enemies and the prophet's cruel imprisonment. (2) His rescue. (3) The king in secret consultation with Jeremiah. 2. A contrast between the king and the prophet. 3. Zedekiah's only hope of escape slighted. 4. Jeremiah's remarkable preservation. 5. The prophet better than his nation.

II. THEME.—Rebellion punished.

III. A STALWART PROPHET.—1. Jeremiah was constantly faithful to his trust. 2. His message to Jehoiakim and the danger to which he was exposed. 3. His messages to Zedekiah. 4. Reasons why the princes hated him. 5. His loyalty to his nation compared with the counsel given to surrender to Babylon. 6. The secret of Jeremiah's strength. He heard and obeyed the voice of God. 7. Other prophets who were persecuted. 8. Favors shown to Jeremiah by King Zedekiah, by Nebuchadnezzar and by the Ethiopian.

IV. A WEAK KING.—1. Zedekiah reigned through the favor of the king of Babylon. 2. His act of rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar. 3. His worst rebellion was that against God. 4. His desire to please his princes was greater than that to harken to God. 5. In trying to save his reputation he lost his sons, his kingdom, his sight and his liberty. 6. Disastrous results follow disregard of divine law. 7. Zedekiah was not as wicked as some of the kings of Judah, but his weakness brought terrible ruin.

V. A CAPTIVE NATION.—1. Recall the early history of the Israelites as they were brought out of Egyptian bondage by the hand of the Lord. 2. Trace the great epochs in the history of the nation. 3. Consider the causes which contributed to its ruin. 4. The nation could have withstood the shock of the division. 5. The great cause of Judah's overthrow, as of Israel's, was idolatry. 6. The little train of captives on their way to Babylon contrasted with the great host of Israel coming out of Egypt. 7. The destruction of Jerusalem. 8. Sin will certainly be punished. 9. Judah cured of idolatry by the seventy years' captivity.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Closing scenes in Judah.

I. Directly accorded with prophecy.

II. Completed the nation's rebellion.

III. Revealed God's guiding hand.

I. Directly accorded with prophecy. The events which make up the history of this chapter serve to disprove the words of the false, flattering prophets, while they confirm the words of God's messengers. The false prophets fell by those judgments which they said would never come. Jeremiah, the true prophet, escaped those judgments which he had declared would come. The false prophets who had held up hope to Judah were shown to be deceivers while Jeremiah was vindicated before all as God's true prophet. Even the Chaldeans saw that things were coming to pass as Jeremiah's God had declared through him. Judah's ill-usage and mocking of God's prophets, and their resolution to go on in their sins, brought final destruction to the nation. The place was not far from ruin when their religion was in ruin. The treatment which Jeremiah received showed how low in degradation the kingdom of Judah had sunk. Wickedness in high places proved the nation's ruin. The people were just as corrupt and godless as their leaders. They forsook God in the day of their

prosperity, and when the hour of their need came, the gods whom they served were not able to deliver them. On their first deviation from God he sent messengers to reprove them and gave them early and timely notice of their danger and duty, thus showing the divine compassion and unwillingness that they should perish. All this was resisted, but its fulfilment could not be resisted.

II. Completed the nation's rebellion. God's arm had saved Judah from Egypt and Assyria. He could have stayed Nebuchadnezzar, but it was no longer consistent with the honor of God to protect so wicked a people. The history of Judah reveals the long-suffering mercy of God toward sinners, and as clearly the certainty of retribution upon unrepented and persistent sin. All the skill, the courage and the endurance which Jerusalem brought to bear in order to avert the awful judgment availed nothing. By sin they had provoked God to leave them only to find that innumerable evils compassed them about. They deceived themselves in thinking to escape God's judgments and further in presuming they could brave them. The king and princes of Judah not only rebelled against the king of Babylon but set themselves in defiance against God. There could be no further forbearance. Many were put to the sword even "in the house of their sanctuary." The Chaldeans not only paid no reverence to the temple but displayed no natural pity to sex or age. Too late the king sought safety in flight from his ruined city, a fugitive from God and Nebuchadnezzar. Though late, he was made sensible of the fact that sin was the cause of all his and his people's miseries. The rich and great of Jerusalem, who had grown so by grinding oppression of the poor, were carried away captive, slain with the sword, or cast into prison. The king met the most trying chastisement of them all. Seeing his sons slain and also the princes whom he had led into such gross rebellion and sin was terrible indeed, and then to be deprived of sight only to make memory a stronger power to increase his misery, was a full recompense for his wilful blindness to God's loving-kindness. He could proceed no further in rebellion. His captivity was for life. King and people had reached the end of power. Thus Judah fell when all Jehovah's attempts to recall the chosen people to their allegiance to him had failed and the apostasy from him and his law had reached the utmost limit.

III. Revealed God's guiding hand. The exile was made a blessing to the whole world, for the Jewish nation was thereby made fit to fulfil its destiny in the redemptive plan of God. This punishment was not the annihilation of the chosen people but a radical cure for them. He is far from confounding the righteous with the wicked in his judgments. When it was discovered that Jeremiah was in chains, he was liberated, provided for and permitted to choose his place of abode. No one is forgotten before God, the Father of all. T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

<p>SIN LEADS US INTO BONDAGE.</p> <p>IT COST ZEDEKIAH HIS EYESIGHT, LOSS OF HIS SONS, LOSS OF CITY, LOSS OF HIS HOME.</p>	<p>CARRIED AWAY</p>  <p>AS CAPTIVES</p>	<p>GOD PROTECTED JEREMIAH.</p> <p>WILL PROTECT ALL WHO TRUST IN HIM.</p> <p>MAKE HIM YOUR CHOICE.</p>
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Practical Applications

Sin. 1. Disobedience. "According to all that Jehoiakim had done" (Jer. 52:2), Zedekiah disbelieved the Lord and disobeyed his commandments as revealed to him by Jeremiah (2 Chron. 36:12). 2. Disloyalty. He failed utterly as king. He did not forbid, oppose and overthrow idolatry. 3. Perfidy. He violated his oath to Nebuchadnezzar, who "made him swear by God" (2 Chron. 36:13) that he would be loyal to him. He broke the promise of fealty he had sworn by an embassy sent to Babylon early in his reign (Jer. 29:3) and by a personal visit to Babylon with Jeremiah in the fourth year of his reign (Jer. 51:59). 4. Treachery. He broke a covenant with the people that all those held in bondage should be liberated (Jer. 34:8-22; 37:5-11). 5. Cowardice. He was cowardly and cruel in his treatment of God's messenger (Jer. 37:21; 38:12). The captivity of Zedekiah is a marked illustration of the wise man's words, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18).

Suffering. 1. Famine. "The famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people" (Jer. 52:6). 2. Desertion. "All the men of war fled...by night" (Jer. 52:7). His friends upon whom he had relied in his time of need deserted him. This is the way of the world. 3. Desolation of the holy city. "Jerusalem...burnt he with fire" (2 Kings 25:9). The ruin was complete. Says Dean Stanley, "The temple, the palace, the houses of the nobles, were deliberately set on fire. The very bones and framework of Jerusalem appeared to be wrapped in flames. The walls and gates seemed to lament and cry as they sank to the earth. The sepulchers, even the consecrated catacombs of the kings, were opened, and the bodies thrown out to the vultures and beasts of prey, which flocked to their frightful feast outside the walls. Jackals wandered even over the sacred hill of Zion." All this came because king and people refused to obey the Lord. 4. Great distress. His sons were murdered before his eyes. The terrible sentence was executed which burned out his eyes, leaving him totally blind, so that the last view impressed on his mind was the death tortures of those he loved. 5. Blindness. "He put out the eyes of Zedekiah" (Jer. 52:11). Sin blinds. Satan puts out the eyes of his captives. 6. Captivity. "The king...carried him to Babylon" (Jer. 52:11).

Salvation. If obliged to stop here, how utterly hopeless and heart-breaking it would be; but the words "carried him to Babylon" (Jer. 52:11) hold a ray of hope, for three times in connection with the record of the incarnation of Jesus we find the words, "The carrying away into Babylon" (Matt. 1:1-17). There is a redemption from captivity. "God bringeth back the captivity of his people" (Psa. 53:6). Christ came to proclaim liberty to the captive and to open prison doors (Luke 4:18). A brother says, "For eight months after I united with the church I used tobacco. Hearing a sermon from Rom. 14:23 led me to doubt whether a Christian should use tobacco. Sunday night I took the matter to God in secret prayer. The following Saturday night I was at home, studying my Sunday-school lesson, when the clock struck ten. It flashed into my mind that a whole week had passed and I had not indulged in a single smoke. I have never had the desire for tobacco since."

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—Sin can not pass unpunished.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

**ZEDEKIAH IN FLIGHT
PUNISHED**

**JEREMIAH PROTECTED
JUDAH TAKEN CAPTIVE**

A king in flight. Let the lesson impress as strongly as possible the truth that God knows all our acts and our thoughts and will sooner or later bring punishment upon us for our sins unless we repent and are forgiven. Give a description of the siege of Jerusalem, telling about the suffering of the Jews for lack of food, and the entrance of the Chaldeans by night into the city after a siege of one and one-half years. Draw a figure representing Jerusalem, and show the entrance of the enemy from the north, and the place by the middle gate where the Chaldean officers sat. Show the gate at the south through which the king and his men passed and his route toward the Jordan. If Zedekiah had obeyed the Lord he would have had no need to flee. Sin always brings trouble.

A king punished. Show that it was scarcely possible for Zedekiah to escape because the Chaldean army surrounded the city and his flight was quickly detected. Give a word picture of the king fleeing for his life, pursued by a large number of Chaldean soldiers, and the capture after a flight of twelve miles. The prophet Jeremiah had told the king how he might escape punishment, but he would not heed his words. Emphasize the lesson that we are likely to suffer if we do not listen to those who are wiser than ourselves and have the right and the goodness to tell us what we should do. Tell about Zedekiah's sorrowful journey as a prisoner to Riblah, two hundred miles north, and of the trial there. The king's punishment was terribly severe. In telling about the punishment call attention to the fact that governments now do not punish as cruelly as they did at that time.

Jeremiah protected. Notice how many times the prophet's life had been threatened, and how the Lord preserved him. He delivered many messages which the people did not like to hear, and they were angry at him, yet he did not fear. Tell the story of Nebuchadnezzar's message regarding the prophet. Dwell upon the spiritual and temporal advantages of carefully obeying the Lord. While the king and his princes were cruelly punished, Jeremiah was cared for and given a home in Jerusalem. Tell the story of God's care for Elijah during the famine, while Ahab was seeking his life.

Judah taken captive. It would be well to tell about the Israelites in Egypt, their oppression, and their deliverance by the hand of Moses. Contrast their march to Canaan with the march of the Jewish captives to Babylon. The Israelites were freed from Egyptian bondage because they believed and obeyed God, and the Jews were taken into Babylonish captivity because they did not believe God and disobeyed him. The people of Judah neglected the last opportunity to be saved from national destruction, as many neglect the last opportunity to seek the Lord and be saved. Now is the time to love and serve the Lord.

LESSON X

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Aug. 28.—Isaiah's prophecy.—Isa. 37:14-38. Tu.—Josiah's devotion.—2 Chron. 34:1-13. Wed.—Finding of the law.—2 Chron. 34:14-33. Th.—Jeremiah acquitted.—Jer. 26:1-24. Fr.—Jehoiakim.—Jer. 36:1-32. Sat.—Cast into prison.—Jer. 37:1-21. Su.—Judah carried captive to Babylon.—Jer. 39:1-18.

REVIEW.—Read Isa. 1:10-20.

SUPT.—10 Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sod'om; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Go-mor'rah.

School.—11 To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.

12 When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?

13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hate: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.

15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

16 Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:

20 But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. Psa. 34:14.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—There is danger in refusing God's mercy.

TOPIC.—Judah a tottering kingdom.

INTRODUCTION.—The kingdom of Israel had fallen and the kingdom of Judah was passing on gradually toward its destruction. The causes which wrought the ruin of the former were working more slowly in the latter, because from time to time there was a disposition on the part of king and people to turn toward the Lord. The period of one hundred thirty-five years from the fall of Samaria to the fall of Judah was favored with the ministry of two of the greatest prophets in Old Testament history and the efforts of two of the most godly kings of Judah, yet the kingdom moved steadily downward until it was overthrown.

SUMMARY.—Lesson I. Topic: Impending calamity. Place: The land of Judah. Under the reign of Hezekiah, Judah was measurably prosperous. This king was honest and earnest in his efforts to accomplish a thorough reformation. The Assyrian army threatened to conquer Judah. Sennacherib, however, attempted to secure the submission of Hezekiah by intimidating him. The king of Judah took the threatening letter which the Assyrian had written him and presented it before the Lord in prayer in the temple. Isaiah also prayed and received the answer that the Lord would defend Jerusalem, and the great army of Sennacherib would be utterly defeated. The enemy would not make an attack upon the city, but would return to Assyria without accomplishing what they had hoped. In one night thousands of their army were slain.

II. Topic: Prophetic view of redemption. Place: Jerusalem. The lesson contains one of the most vivid descriptions of the Messiah in all the range of prophecy. In connection with the prediction of his coming, he is presented as being rejected by those whom he came to bless. His sufferings are minutely described, and over and over again the truth is repeated that his sufferings were to be endured for men. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him," only in the sense that through his sufferings great benefit would come to the world. His griefs and sorrows were not to be in vain. The Christ who was to make "his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death," was to be forever triumphant.

III. Topic: Reaction against religious reform. Places: Jerusalem; Babylon. Manasseh's reign was the longest of all the kings of Judah and Israel. He was one of the worst kings that ever sat upon the throne of Judah. His wickedness consisted in introducing the most degrading forms of idolatrous worship into Judah, and he even erected altars to false gods in the very courts of the temple. His sin is spoken of as being worse than that of the heathen of surrounding countries. The Lord spoke to Manasseh by his prophets, seeking to gain his attention, but all to no purpose. In justice as well as in mercy the Lord permitted him to be taken into captivity in Babylon. By this means he was led to humble himself before the Lord. God regarded his prayer and he was restored to his kingdom and attempted to undo the wrong that he had done.

IV. Topic: Independence of Christian character. Place: Jerusalem. The successor of Manasseh in Judah was his young son Josiah, who proved to be one of the best rulers in the history of the nation. He must have been trained under godly influences, for his efforts were for the moral upbuilding of the nation. In the eighth year of his reign he sought the Lord, and in the twelfth he began to uproot idolatry which had a firm hold in the nation. He did not confine his efforts to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, but wrought reforms also in the tribes that had constituted the northern kingdom. In harmony with his efforts to destroy idolatry was his purpose to repair the house of the Lord, which had been allowed to fall into decay, and to restore the worship of Jehovah now for a long time neglected.

V. Topic: Providential discoveries. Place: Jerusalem. An important discovery was made in connection with the work of repairing the temple. Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law of the Lord which had been lost for years. When it was read before the king he was so deeply affected by it that he rent his clothes in token of his grief. Inquiry was made of the Lord through Huldah, the prophetess, and the king was assured that the curses pronounced in the book would be visited upon the nation because of their sins, but he himself would be spared from seeing the destruction of his people, for it would not take place in his day, because of his faithfulness to God.

VI. Topic: God's terms with sinners. Place: Jerusalem. In the early part of the reign of Jehoiakim, who succeeded Josiah, his father, Jeremiah uttered a prophecy in which the destruction of the nation was predicted unless they repented. The Lord sent this message in an effort to induce Judah to turn away from their idolatry and rebellion. The priests and false prophets were enraged at Jeremiah because of this prophecy, and declared that he ought to be put to death. When the case was brought before the princes and the people, they recognized the fact that the message was from the Lord, and declared that the prophet was not worthy of death. The Lord thus raised up friends for Jeremiah to protect him. "Ahikam the son of Shaphan," being especially helpful to him.

VII. Topic: Divine deliverance despised. Place: Jerusalem. In the fifth year of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, a message was read to the people assembled at Jerusalem which made a deep impression upon them. It was a message which the Lord gave to Jeremiah, and which Baruch, the scribe, wrote as the prophet dictated it. This was another gracious opportunity given to the nation to return to the Lord. The princes upon hearing it decided that the king ought to know what was in the roll. The king was angry and with his penknife cut off strip after strip of the parchment and threw it into the fire until all was consumed. Afterward the Lord told Jeremiah to write the same message in another roll and in addition to write the judgments that would come upon Jehoiakim.

VIII. Topic: God's constancy to Judah. Place: Jerusalem. After the three months' reign of Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim, Zedekiah, a son of Josiah, became king by the appointment of Nebuchadnezzar. Zedekiah rebelled against Babylon, and Nebuchadnezzar's army besieged Jerusalem. Jeremiah uttered a prophecy that the city would fall into the hands of the Chaldeans, in spite of the fact that the besieging army would depart for a time to fight against the army of Egypt. While the army was away Jeremiah left the city to go to his former home at Anathoth. The princes falsely accused him of going over to the enemy and put him in a dungeon. The king sought counsel of him later and had him placed in more comfortable quarters.

IX. Topic: Closing scenes in Judah. Places: Jerusalem; Riblah; Babylon. After a siege of a year and a half the Chaldeans broke down the walls of Jerusalem and gained an entrance into the city. King Zedekiah and his men of war sought to escape but were soon overtaken and made prisoners. They were taken to Riblah, where Nebuchadnezzar had his headquarters, and severe judgment was passed upon Zedekiah. His sons and his nobles were slain, his eyes were put out and he was taken in chains to Babylon, where he was a prisoner until he died. All the important people of Judah were taken to Babylon, only the poor people being left to care for the fields and vineyards. The walls of Jerusalem were broken down and the principal buildings were burned.

TABULAR VIEW

No.	SUBJECTS	GOLDEN TEXTS	PRACTICAL TRUTHS	OUTLINES
I.	Isaiah's Prophecy Concerning Sennacherib. Isa. 37:14-38.	God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Psa. 46:1.	There is always virtue in true prayer.	I. Hezekiah's prayer. II. The Lord's answer. III. Sennacherib's defeat.
II.	The Suffering Servant of Jehovah. Isa. 52:13-53:12.	The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isa. 53:6.	We may be saved from our sins through the atonement made by the suffering Christ.	I. A prophecy of Christ. II. The rejected Christ. III. The suffering Christ. IV. The triumphant Christ.
III.	Manasseh's Wickedness and Penitence. 2 Chron. 33:1-20.	Cease to do evil; learn to do well. Isa. 1:16, 17.	There is pardon for those who truly repent.	I. Manasseh's wickedness. II. Manasseh's punishment. III. Manasseh's repentance.
IV.	Josiah's Devotion to God. 2 Chron. 34:1-13.	Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth. Eccl. 12:1.	To serve the Lord from youth is the highest wisdom.	I. Josiah's moral excellence. II. Destroying idolatry. III. Repairing the temple.
V.	The Finding of the Book of the Law. 2 Chron. 34:14-33.	Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. Psa. 119:11.	God's word is of priceless value and is within the reach of us all.	I. The book of the law found. II. The effect upon the king. III. Huldah's prophecy. IV. A public reading of the law.
VI.	Jeremiah Tried and Acquitted. Jer. 26:1-24.	The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? Psa. 27:1.	It requires faith and courage to follow one's convictions of duty.	I. Warnings given by Jeremiah. II. Charges against the prophet. III. Jeremiah's defense. IV. Jeremiah's acquittal.
VII.	Jehoiakim Burns the Prophet's Book. Jer. 36:1-32.	The word of our God shall stand for ever. Isa. 40:8.	We may reject God's word, but it will still condemn us.	I. Jeremiah's prophecy written and read. II. The prophecy read before the king and destroyed by him. III. The prophecy restored.
VIII.	Jeremiah Cast into Prison. Jer. 37:1-21.	Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Matt. 5:11.	Those who are true to God may expect persecution.	I. Jeremiah's message to Judah. II. Jeremiah unjustly imprisoned. III. Jeremiah favored by Zedekiah.
IX.	Judah Carried Captive to Babylon. Jer. 39:1-18.	Be sure your sin will find you out. Num. 32:23.	The persistently rebellious have no escape from the judgments of God.	I. Jerusalem taken. II. Zedekiah's punishment. III. Judah taken captive. IV. Kindness to Jeremiah. V. A message to Ebed-melech.

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. The review covers a period of one hundred thirty-five years, from the fall of Israel to the fall of Judah. 2. The forbearance of God is remarkably displayed. 3. The downward course of the unrepentant sinner is represented in the decline and fall of the Jewish nation. 4. The attitude of mankind toward God's law and love.

II. THEME.—God's mercy spurned.

III. JUDAH'S PROPHETS.—1. The nature of the prophetic office. 2. Judah's need of prophets. 3. Judah's attitude toward the prophets. 4. The prophet Isaiah. (1) His rank among Jewish prophets. (2) His prophecy when Sennacherib was besieging Jerusalem. (3) His vision of the coming Messiah. 5. The prophet Jeremiah. (1) His ancestry and early home. (2) In what respects did he differ from Isaiah. (3) His trial and acquittal. (4) His prophetic roll. (5) His imprisonment and release. (6) The provision made for him after the fall of Judah.

IV. JUDAH'S KINGS.—1. Eight of the twenty kings of Judah reigned during this period. 2. Hezekiah was king of Judah when Israel fell. (1) His moral character. (2) His deliverance from Sennacherib. 3. Manasseh. (1) His bad record. (2) The extent of his idolatry. (3) The means used to bring him to repentance. (4) The length of his reign. 4. Amon and Jehoahaz passed over without notice. 5. Josiah. (1) His parentage. (2) His age when he became king. (3) His works for the reformation of Judah. (4) No stain upon his moral character. 6. Jehoiakim. (1) His ancestry. (2) His wickedness. (3) His attitude toward the word of God. (4) His punishment. 7. Jehoiachin. (1) A brief reign. (2) Taken captive. A prisoner for thirty-seven years. 8. Zedekiah. (1) Parentage. (2) Made king by Nebuchadnezzar. (3) His rebellion. (4) His punishment.

V. JUDAH'S ENEMIES.—1. The Assyrians under Sennacherib. 2. The Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar. 3. The secret of the success of these enemies against Judah. God withdrew his protecting hand and allowed the enemies of Judah to have their way. 4. The complete overthrow of Judah. 5. Contrast Israel's deliverance from Egypt under the leadership of Moses and the captivity of the nation.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Judah a tottering kingdom.

I. Her prophets.

II. Her kings.

III. Her people.

I. Her prophets. The presence of the prophets in Judah was not merely incidental nor their office unimportant. They spoke as the oracles of God, both to strengthen and direct the people in times of deep distress, and to warn and entreat them against apostasy. Their position among the people betokened God's watch-care for his faltering people. Their messages breathed forth the divine faithfulness in that they revealed plainly the sins of the nation and pointed out the way of repentance. With every threatening and warning was given an entreaty to return to God and his true worship with the promise of pardon to all repentant souls. Isaiah was faithful to his vision and consecration and failed not to perform his prophetic duties whether they touched upon the evil of the times and the dark days to which Judah was fast hastening or whether they glowed with the glories of the coming of Christ's kingdom. His faithfulness in declaring

the warnings of the Lord won for him the gracious opportunity of looking into the future when the "Desire of all nations" should come and through whom salvation should be offered to all peoples. Isaiah's prophetic vision of Christ so wonderfully connects the Old Testament with the New that it is called the "gospel of Isaiah." That he should have been given that marvelous view of the future while Judah was so corrupt and ready to fall, is convincing proof of his fellowship with God. It also disclosed God's constant purpose to redeem his people from the power of sin, and in their darkest hour sent forth a gleam of hope. The prophet Jeremiah filled an important position after Isaiah. His close, searching messages did not allow the people to forget that God was calling them from sin. They revealed sin and its consequences and the only way of deliverance from it. Faithfulness marked his entire career. Amid persecution he continued his pleadings as God's representative in the midst of his people.

II. Her kings. Good and evil, light and darkness, righteousness and sin changed places in the later part of the history of Judah. Her kings stood in contrast to each other in their character and rule. It was a seeming contest between the powers of darkness and the strength of man's devotion to God. The power of choice is strongly brought out in this history. Good and evil were set before Judah. Divine counsel and help were offered to enable them to resist evil. Hezekiah and Josiah were strong, godly men who proved the possibility of rising to the standard of God's requirements. They gave heed to God's law. They sought to know the right. Prosperity attended their rule. Marvelous deliverances against their enemies were wrought, while under the other kings, studied in this section, we see crime, persecution and increasing apostasy. God's prophets were mocked and ill-treated. God's law was spurned and the whole nation was encouraged in wilful transgression.

III. Her people. Upon the people of Judah the weakening power of sin was strongly marked. They were weak in individuality, purpose and will. Under strong, godly kings they gave evidence of real desire to return to the true worship of God, and so long as they were urged and required to observe the law, in a measure they did so. In those times remarkable help was given them. On the other hand, when wicked kings ruled, the people sank to the lowest depths in morals and idolatry. All knowledge of God and his law seemed forgotten. All regard for divine messages through the prophets was either ignored or despised. Their leading men were leaders in sin. They who should have ministered in holy things dealt treacherously. False prophets dared to declare messages contrary to those given by God's faithful prophets. Rather than accept God's messages the people, unmoved, suffered the king to burn the written word. T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

<p>I. A. B. C. S. II. T. S. S. - J. III. M. W. - R. IV. J. D. - E.</p>	<p>REVIEW. DEPART FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD.</p>	<p>V. T. F. - E. - L. VI. J. T. - A. VII. J. B. - P. B. VIII. J. C. - P. IX. J. C. C. - B.</p>
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Practical Applications

"He was wounded for our transgressions" (Isa. 53: 5). No one can carefully read the Old Testament and the New without seeing numerous references to the great doctrine of sacrifice for sin. The patriarchal and Mosaic systems of sacrifices proclaim release from sin through the death of a victim. The sacrifices then offered pointed to the sacrifice of the Lamb of God for the sins of the world. Christ "bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness" (1 Pet. 2: 24). He suffered in our stead. An ancient king made a decree that any one found guilty of committing a certain crime should be punished by having his eyes put out. His own son was the first to be convicted of the crime. The king must uphold his own law, yet parental love urged him to permit his son to retain his eyesight. He solved the problem by causing his son to lose one of his eyes, and the king had one of his own put out.

"In affliction, he . . . humbled himself" (2 Chron. 33: 12). Manasseh does not stand as the only one in history who came to his senses through falling into adversity. Many can say, "Before I was afflicted I went astray" (Psa. 119: 67). The Lord is intensely interested in our being saved. If he sees that sorrows or losses will bring one to repentance, he will let them come upon him. While this is true, it can not be said that because one suffers therefore he is sinful. Men have testified that while they were prosperous in business and had all of earthly good that money and position could procure they were forgetful of God, but when losses came and they were left destitute they turned toward the Lord.

"Departed not from following the Lord" (2 Chron. 34: 33). Many things in Josiah are commendable, and among them are his devotion to the house of the Lord and his ready acceptance of the book of the law. God's word is like a lighthouse on the seashore. In constructing a lighthouse great care is taken to make it solid and permanent. The lights are carefully arranged so as to shine brightly and steadily. Seamen are guided by this light, being able to avoid dangerous rocks and shoals. Sailors may deliberately disregard the light and be wrecked, so men may neglect God's word and go down to ruin.

"The king had burned the roll" (Jer. 36: 27). In striking contrast to Josiah's reverence for God's word was Jehoiakim's contempt for it. God's word is indestructible, no matter how great may be the hatred toward it or how strong may be the efforts put forth against it. Voltaire boasted that he would destroy it in a few years, but his boast was vain. The very house which he occupied became later a Bible repository. Jehoiakim's unholiness has been followed by multitudes in the centuries since he lived.

"Carried away captive into Babylon" (Jer. 39: 9). The folly of Judah and Israel has been repeated over and over in the world's history. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Eccl. 8: 11). Men presume upon the mercy of God. They love their own ways and persist in following them in defiance of the authority and power of the Almighty. Men say they will not submit to God, but sometimes they repent. A man declared that he would never bow his knee to God and in so doing used very irreverent language. Shortly before he died he fell upon his knees and pleaded for mercy, and was saved.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—The ways of sin lead to destruction.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

Four Kings

{ Manasseh
Josiah
Jehoiakim
Zedekiah

Two Prophets

{ Isaiah
Jeremiah

JUDAH IN CAPTIVITY

The period. Tell briefly the general character of the period from the fall of Israel to the captivity of Judah, stating the length of time and the number of kings that ruled. The length of time was the same as from the year 1776 to the present time, and eight kings occupied the throne.

Four kings. It will be well to omit any particular consideration of the kings, Hezekiah, Amon, Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin. Tell the story of the long reign of Manasseh. Although he was the king who reigned the longest, he was not a good man, especially in the early part of his reign. Compare his character and reign with that of his father Hezekiah. It will be easy to interest the class in an account of Josiah's reign. Be prepared to give four dates in his life and dwell briefly upon what he did at those times. Make emphatic the secret of Josiah's success as king. The story of Jehoiakim's destroying the roll containing the prophecy of Jeremiah will always interest children, and will furnish an opportunity to teach the lesson of reverence for God's word. Because this king rejected his word, God allowed severe punishment to come upon him. King Zedekiah was not as bad as some of the other kings of Judah, yet he was weak enough not to follow the path which the Lord showed him by his prophet. Tell about his asking Jeremiah regarding the future of Jerusalem. He consulted the prophet secretly, because he was ashamed or afraid to let his princes know what he was doing, and he was afraid to follow the counsels given him by the Lord for the same reason.

Two prophets. Find out what the children remember about Isaiah. Dwell briefly upon Isaiah's prayer and prophecy at the time when Sennacherib threatened to destroy Jerusalem. Spend a few minutes upon Isaiah's remarkable prophecy of the coming Christ. Bring out three events in Jeremiah's life. 1. His arrest when he started to go to his old home. 2. His imprisonment later, because his enemies did not like his prophecies. 3. His preservation when Jerusalem was destroyed. Good men are sometimes called to suffer persecution. Jeremiah loved God and he loved the Jewish people. He tried to do them good, yet they caused him to suffer keenly. Tell the story of John Bunyan's imprisonment for preaching the gospel.

Judah in captivity. Tell of the many warnings that God sent to the nation, but they went right on in their disobedience, until they were overthrown. Review the story of the eighteen months' siege of Jerusalem, the attempted escape of King Zedekiah, his capture and punishment. Describe the sad march of those thousands of captive Jews toward Babylon. The captivity begun twenty years before was to continue fifty years more. This punishment was the result of sin.

LESSON XI

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Sept. 4.—Daniel.—Dan. 1: 8-20. Tu.—Temptations of Daniel.—Dan. 1: 1-7. Wed.—The Rechabites.—Jer. 35: 1-19. Th.—Refusing to eat flesh and drink wine.—Rom. 14: 13-23. Fr.—My brother.—1 Cor. 8: 1-13. Sat.—Crucifying the flesh with the passions.—Gal. 5: 13-26. Su.—Not in reveling.—Rom. 13: 1-14.

DANIEL AND HIS COMPANIONS—Temperance Lesson.—Dan. 1: 8-20.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 8, 9)

SUPT.—8 But Dan'iel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

School.—9 Now God had brought Dan'iel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.

10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Dan'iel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king.

11 Then said Dan'iel to Mel'zar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Dan'iel, Han-a-ni'ah, Mi'sha-el, and Az-a-ri'ah,

12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.

13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.

14 So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.

15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.

16 Thus Mel'zar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.

17 As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Dan'iel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

18 Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Neb-u-chad-nez'zar.

19 And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Dan'iel, Han-a-ni'ah, Mi'sha-el, and Az-a-ri'ah: therefore stood they before the king.

20 And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.

*AMERICAN REVISION

8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's dainties, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. 9 Now God made Daniel to find kindness and compassion in the sight of the prince of the eunuchs. 10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your food and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse looking than the youths that are of your own age? so would ye endanger my head with the king. 11 Then said Daniel to the steward whom the prince of the eunuchs had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: 12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. 13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the youths that eat of the king's dainties; and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.

14 So he hearkened unto them in this matter, and proved them ten days. 15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer, and they were fatter in flesh, than all the youths that did eat of the king's dainties. 16 So the steward took away their dainties, and the wine that they should drink, and gave them pulse.

17 Now as for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. 18 And at the end of the days which the king had appointed for bringing them in, the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. 19 And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. 20 And in every matter of wisdom and understanding, concerning which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his realm.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? **School.**—It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth. Rom. 14: 21.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—God blesses those who make and maintain right choices.

TOPIC.—True purpose.

OUTLINE.—I. Daniel's purpose and request. II. The request granted. III. Daniel and his companions favored.

TIME.—About B. C. 605.

PLACES.—Babylon.

READ.—Dan. 1.

INTRODUCTION.—A few years after Jehoiakim became king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, took from Judah captives and a part of the treasure of the house of the Lord. Among the captives were four youths of noble families of Judah, who were destined to become important factors in the history of Babylon and of the Jewish people. The king of Babylon gave direction that some of these captives should be selected to be nourished and trained for positions of trust in his government. Those chosen must be superior in physical strength, beauty and intelligence. Among those selected were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, to whom, according to Oriental custom, new

names were given. The names which these young men bore had each some reference to God: Daniel means, "Jehovah is my judge;" Hananiah, "The Lord is gracious;" Mishael, "Who is what God is?" Azariah, "The Lord hath helped." In each case the new name given had some reference to a heathen god. The courage and faith of these young men have been an inspiration to God's people in all ages, and the stories of their heroic deeds have left ineffaceable impressions upon untold millions of young minds and hearts. Of the book of Daniel, Curtis says, "No one can read the book without being taught lessons of sublime faith, and having a firmer assurance of the ultimate triumph of the kingdom of God;" and Farrar says, "There is scarcely a single book in the Old Testament which can be more richly profitable." The first six chapters relate the experiences of Daniel and his companions and the other six are mostly taken up with the several visions that Daniel had.

COMMENTARY.—I. DANIEL'S PURPOSE AND REQUEST (vs. 8-13). 8. Daniel—It has been believed by some that Daniel was a relative of King Zedekiah, but the evidence is not positive. It is certain that he belonged to a noble family in Judah. He was in Babylon during the entire period of the seventy years' captivity and lived some time after

that. He died at the age of eighty-five years or more. **purposed in his heart**—Literally, "Laid it on his heart." Underneath his purpose was a strong desire to keep a clear conscience in spite of his heathen surroundings. **would not defile himself with...the king's meat, nor...wine**—Daniel had been instructed in the law of God. The law of Moses forbade the eating of certain kinds of animals, and prescribed the manner of killing the animals which were to be eaten. The children of Israel were not to eat the blood. It was customary for heathen people to offer their food and drink to their idols by pouring out portions on the ground. Thus the Jew might defile himself: 1. By eating animals that were unclean. 2. By eating the flesh of beasts that had been strangled. 3. By partaking of that which had been offered in sacrifice to idols. "The king's dainties" (R. V.) would also be likely to weaken the physical and mental vigor of the Jewish youths. Daniel's temperance principles would not admit of his drinking wine. **the prince of the eunuchs**—This was Ashpenaz (v. 3). "Eunuchs were, and still are, common in Oriental courts; they sometimes attained to great influence with the monarch, and were treated by him as confidential servants."—*Driver*. **9. into favour and tender love**—The Revised Version, "To find kindness and compassion," is more exact. Ashpenaz became favorable to Daniel as soon as the latter made the request mentioned in the preceding verse. Daniel had a noble and amiable disposition, which won the admiration and love of Ashpenaz. Besides this the Lord was directing the course of Daniel and was moving upon the heart of the prince of the eunuchs to the end that the future prophet might have a standing at the court of Babylon. **10. I fear my lord the king**—Ashpenaz had received his orders and it would endanger his life to disobey them. Oriental monarchs were despots, had the power of life and death and did not hesitate to exercise that power (Dan. 2:5, 12) at the slightest provocation. This servant was responsible to the king for the physical condition and intellectual advancement of the Jewish youths. **worse liking**—"Worse looking."—R. V. In worse condition. The use of the plural, "faces," shows that the three companions of Daniel were also included in the request for a simple diet. **children**—It is probable that the youths were about sixteen years of age.

11. Melzar—"The steward."—R. V. This is not a proper name, but "the term evidently denotes some subordinate official, appointed by the chief of the eunuchs to be in personal charge of Daniel and his companions."—*Cam. Bible*. **12. prove thy servants**—Daniel and his companions had confidence in the course they desired to take. They believed that if they honored God in keeping his law he would honor them and give them prosperity. **ten days**—Farrar calls this "a sort of mystic Persian week." It was long enough to give an idea as to the effects of the diet. **pulse**—The word means leguminous food, such as beans and peas, but is used here in a wider sense to include vegetable foods in general. **water to drink**—The wisdom, as well as piety, of the Hebrew young men was shown in their purpose to abstain entirely from the use of strong drink. **13. as thou seest, deal with thy servants**—Temperance never fears tests; it is intemperance, and the liquor dealers who foster it, that are afraid to be investigated.—*Peloubet*.

II. THE REQUEST GRANTED (vs. 14-16). **14. he consented**—"Hearkened."—R. V. "A courteous request obtained favor where a peremptory demand might have been refused." The steward may have been the more ready to grant the request, since the

test was for only ten days; and if the Hebrew youths did not thrive during that time, there remained nearly three years of training, during which any slight disadvantage could be overcome. **15. appeared fairer, and they were fatter in flesh** (R. V.)—Godliness promotes temperance; temperance, health; health, a good complexion. Peace with God brings peace of conscience, serenity of mind and sweetness of temper; and these are the certain means of bringing sweetness of countenance.—*Robinson*. It is an evident fact that those who give themselves over to the pleasures of the flesh bear the signs of dissipation upon their countenances. The Hebrew youths were obeying their consciences and had a firm trust in God, therefore they thrived upon the healthful diet which they chose. **16. Melzar took away the portion of their meat**—"The steward took away their dainties."—R. V. The ten days' test had been so satisfactory that the steward considered it safe to continue to give the Jewish youths the kind of food and drink which they desired.

III. DANIEL AND HIS COMPANIONS FAVORED (vs. 17-20). **17. God gave them knowledge, etc.**—The source of their success was not overlooked. God's hand was plainly recognized in the whole transaction. "The 'wisdom' of the Chaldean priests, except in so far as it took cognizance of the actual facts of astronomy, was in reality nothing but a systematized superstition."—*Cam. Bible*. They needed to be deeply versed in the Chaldean wisdom, as formerly Moses was in the wisdom of Egypt (Acts 7:22), to be able to put to shame the wisdom of this world by the hidden wisdom of God.—*Keil*. In all the branches of learning known at that time the Chaldeans were the most proficient. **Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams**—Visions were revelations to the prophets when awake, and dreams when asleep. God thus made one of the despised covenant people eclipse the Chaldean sages in the very science on which they most prided themselves. So Joseph in the court of Pharaoh (Gen. 40:5; 41:1-8).—*J., F. & B.* God gave Daniel this skill in the interpretation of dreams as a preparation for the great work that lay before him. The great men of Babylon were to know something of Jehovah, the God of Israel. **18. at the end of the days**—At the end of three years (v.5). **brought them in**—Not only Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, but all the youths mentioned in verses 3 and 4. **19. the king communed with them**—Nebuchadnezzar talked with the young men with a view to ascertaining the progress they had made during their three years' training, and their fitness for the positions in which he desired their service. He found the four total abstinents superior to the others at every point. **before the king**—As his personal attendants. **20. in all matters of wisdom...ten times better**—The king found further, upon putting to them difficult questions, that in a knowledge of the technicalities of their science the four Jewish youths excelled even the wise men of Babylon themselves.—*Driver*. The term "ten times better" means greatly superior, the number denoting completeness, as seven is considered a perfect number.

QUESTIONS.—Who was Daniel and how came he to be in Babylon? Who were his three companions? What request did Daniel make and for what reason? In what respects was this a wise request? How was the request looked upon by Ashpenaz? What was the result of the ten days' test? How long was the course of training given to the young men? What was the object of the training? What was the result of the course which the youths took?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. The book of Daniel. (1) Experiences relating to Daniel. (2) Records of the prophet's visions. (3) The events recorded belong to the period of the captivity. 2. The youth Daniel. (1) His nationality and nobility. (2) A captive in Babylon. (3) An illustrious example of devotion to right principles. 3. This is most emphatically a temperance lesson.

II. THEME.—God's blessing upon a noble purpose.

III. DANIEL'S PURPOSE.—1. The circumstances of the captivity of Daniel and his companions. 2. Their probable age at the time of their selection for training. 3. The significance of the change in their names. 4. The course of training proposed by King Nebuchadnezzar. 5. The nature of the purpose in which Daniel was joined by his three companions. 6. The reasons why they would be defiled by eating the food brought from the king's table, and by drinking wine. 7. The circumstances of the Jewish youths were unfavorable to their forming and maintaining such a purpose. 8. The course of Daniel and his friends is an example for us.

IV. DANIEL'S REQUEST GRANTED.—1. Daniel's courtesy in presenting his request. 2. The nature of the diet which he desired. 3. God's hand in making the officer having the young men in charge favorable toward them. 4. Men honor those who have convictions and stand by them. 5. The Hebrew youths believed that God would so favor them in the proposed ten days' test that the steward would be convinced. 6. The position in which the chief of the eunuchs placed himself. 7. Compare multitudes of young men in Christian lands, who fall quickly into temptation, with those Jewish youths who stood firmly when they had no outside encouragement.

V. THE RESULTS OF ABSTINENCE.—1. Physical effects. (1) Their countenances were fairer than those of the others. (2) They gained in flesh. 2. Intellectual effects. (1) They were able to learn readily. (2) Their minds were not dulled by the king's dainties and wine. 3. The difference between the two classes of young men was easily recognized by the king. 4. The way of temperance is the way of beauty, health, plenty, intellectual superiority and moral excellence.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—True purpose.

I. Gave character to Daniel's career.

II. Influenced others to obey God.


I. Gave character to Daniel's career. The opening chapter of the book of Daniel contains the key and clue to all that follows for it reveals to us the character of its author. Captive as he was, Daniel had a loyal soul. He was as free in spirit in Babylon as he was in Jerusalem. He and his three friends were involuntary exiles from their native land. It was like the proud spirit of Nebuchadnezzar to surround himself with all the splendor of talent that would reflect additional glory on himself and his throne. He wished to avail himself of the best talent from the kingdom he had conquered. He chose the best material and then proceeded, as he hoped, to subject it to the habits and discipline which would naturalize it in its new country. The nation's most splendid characters appeared in its darkest hours. The king of Babylon proposed to turn their superiority to account. His plan aimed at alienation with the young men. At the outset

there arose a religious difficulty. Perhaps the low state of religion in his own country had served to increase in Daniel the sense of responsibility for an absolutely true course in his life in Babylon. The morals of the Jews were depressed to the brink of national apostasy until Jerusalem was as impure as Babylon, but Daniel was from the very beginning of his career a true witness for pure religion. Had he yielded to the first temptation he would hardly have recovered his faith at a later time. The favor of God was more to him than life. This was a crisis in Daniel's early life. The seemingly insignificant circumstances formed his battle-field of great principles. By his true purpose, his firmness and prudence, Daniel committed himself to a life of piety. To do otherwise meant the surrender of principle, compromise of truth and apostasy from true religion. He would have lost favor with God, turned his back upon his early faith, forgotten his own country and become a Babylonian idolater. He therefore gave himself wholly to a certain definite purpose which he deliberately formed. While Daniel had formed this settled purpose in his heart, he adopted the most prudent measures to accomplish the object he had in view. God stood by Daniel and gave him favor with the eunuch. Though a youth, Daniel took a stand for temperance and righteousness against temptations and inducements which many times have shaken the purpose of strong men. Temperance in youth secured him against remorse in old age. He thus brought to himself divine help in character-making.

II. Influenced others to obey God. Daniel's courage was influential and victorious. Moderation meant mastery. Daniel's consistent, godly, upright life proved a great power with those who were over him and with his companions. His faithfulness as a true witness for God gave inspiration to others. He was true to a godly education, not only in external virtues of religion but in its very essence and power. His good example represented more fully the nature of virtue than any plea or description of it could have done. Daniel and his three companions made a supreme regard for the will of God their rule of conduct even in the externals of religion. The result of their faithfulness to God was their promotion in the palace and in the favor of the king. Their knowledge and skill, their learning and wisdom are directly traced to the hand of the Giver of all good. He blessed their simple diet to their physical good and also quickened their intellects. Their Hebrew names were a witness not only to their nationality but to their religion, and so these were changed to suit King Nebuchadnezzar; yet their hearts remained unchanged toward the King of kings. It was a testing time for four young men full of possibilities, with great opportunities presented, to maintain their standards of right. Their lives were a practical demonstration of the blessings and benefits of temperance and piety, and an example of the success of prudence, temperance and a steady regard for religion.

T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

<p>A YOUTHFUL TEMPERANCE LEADER.</p> <p>DANIEL'S EXAMPLE HAS INFLUENCED MILLIONS.</p> <p>STRONG DRINK IS A TERRIBLE ENEMY.</p>		<p>A NOBLE ARMY OF BOYS AND GIRLS ARE RECRUITING TO FIGHT IT.</p> <p>WHO WILL ENLIST TO-DAY?</p> <p>THE RIGHT WILL WIN AT LAST.</p>
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Practical Applications

Piety. "Daniel purposed in his heart" (v. 8). Faith is of the heart (Psa. 112: 7; Prov. 3: 5). Piety is of the heart (Prov. 23: 7; Psa. 119: 32). As a sound heart is the life of the flesh (Prov. 14: 30), so a true heart is the life of the Spirit (Prov. 4: 23). Piety is the foundation of all Christian graces.

Positiveness. "Daniel....would not" (v. 8). He was as immovable as the granite hills around his old home in Jerusalem. His will was inexorable, his determination was decided, his purpose was inflexible. Signing a pledge and joining a temperance society have been condemned because of their inadequacy. This is a mistake. The purpose, "I will not drink," is a long step toward trusting Christ to keep one from drink. To put the will on the side of temperance is a good thing. The greatest general of modern times was great in his ability to say "No." Traveling in India, General Grant was surrounded by social customs, to disregard which required as strong a will and as firm a purpose as this of Daniel's. At Burma the reception committee furnished large baskets of champagne and liquors, subject to Grant's orders. To the disappointment and disgust of the committee, the baskets were not opened. Surprise was expressed, but Grant simply said, "Gentlemen, I do not wish anything to drink;" and the baskets were returned to Calcutta unopened. After Grant reached California his old friends were the witnesses of his personal decision. While in the city of Mexico his enthusiastic admirers invited him to a "wine dinner." Bishop Harris was present, who said that General Grant deliberately turned his glasses upside down.

Purity. "Daniel....would not defile himself" (v. 8). Defilement is sin (2 Cor. 7: 1). "Daniel.... would not defile himself....with the wine" (v. 8). He asked for "water to drink" (v. 12). Drinking intoxicating wine tends to defile spirit, soul and body. Drinking water never overworks the heart, nor checks the action of the lungs, nor inflames the liver, nor arrests digestion, nor creates an appetite which is increased by being gratified.

Politeness. "Therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs" (v. 8). "Prove thy servants, I beseech thee" (v. 12), he said to the steward. Daniel was a young man under authority. He modestly and mildly requested that he and his companions might be permitted to live on pulse and water for ten days by way of experiment (vs. 12, 13). It is possible to combine steadfastness with courtesy. The greatest politeness is associated with the highest piety. Those great in grace know how to speak "the truth in love" (Eph. 4: 15).

Prosperity. 1. Physical comeliness. Daniel and the Hebrew children were fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat of the king's meat (v. 15). The king found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers (v. 20). 2. Intellectual power. God gave Daniel knowledge and skill to use it, "learning" and "wisdom" to apply it and a miraculous understanding of "all visions and dreams" (v. 17). All total abstainers, filled with the knowledge and wisdom that God gives us, are "ten times better" than worldly men who tamper with that which steals away the brains. 3. Position. "Daniel continued even unto the first year of King Cyrus" (v. 21). Through successive reigns of many years Daniel was honored by kings. He became the prime minister of the kingdom. He who will not be of the world shall rule the world. Power never comes through compromise. Temperance tends toward wealth, honor, promotion and every prosperity.

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—God honors those who maintain right purposes.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

Jewish youths in captivity.

DANIEL'S { PURPOSE
TEST
TRIUMPH

In captivity. Refer briefly to Joseph as a slave in Egypt and the great benefits that came to his family and to the Egyptians. Recall also the story of the Jewish girl who was made a slave by the Syrians and who was the means of sending Naaman, her master, to Israel, where he was cured of his leprosy. It will be necessary to tell the circumstances under which Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were taken as captives to Babylon. This was at the beginning of the seventy years' captivity, and Daniel remained a captive during those seventy years. He was still in Babylon in the time of Cyrus after the close of the captivity. Even in captivity he was a blessing to his captors.

Daniel's purpose. The simple story of Daniel which we have in this lesson is intensely interesting to children and carries with it its moral teachings. Explain the object the king had in view in selecting the choicest of the Jewish boys to be fed from his table and to be educated. Explain also how the food would be likely to offend conscientious Jews. The meat might be that of unclean animals. It might not be properly prepared. It was likely that the food had been offered in sacrifice to idols. The wine had also been thus offered. Strong drink was refused, moreover, because of its injurious effects. Dwell upon the courage and manliness of Daniel in purposing in his heart not to defile himself. One may defile himself by falsehood, by theft, by deception, by bad language, by envy, by selfishness, by hatred. Note the encouragement that most of us have to make right purposes.

Daniel's test. This young man and his three companions were sure that God would bless and prosper them in taking the course they believed to be right. They had made their request humbly and kindly, and the Lord helped in having it granted. Explain to the class that the food given to them was different kinds of grain, fruit and vegetables, and they had water to drink. God was preparing Daniel for the great work that lay before him. There are many children who want everything they see and hear of whether it would be good for them or not. It was not so with Daniel.

The triumph. Thus far the four Hebrew boys had been successful. Tell about the three years of dieting and training. At last the day came when they must appear before the king that he might examine them. That was a peculiar examination. He was to examine their looks, their weight and their skill in answering hard questions. The four total abstainers were far ahead of all the others, and were given high positions by the king. They had not used strong drink, which weakens mental power. Theodore Roosevelt said, "There is not a thought in a hog's head of beer. Nothing of merit was ever written under the inspiration of lager beer. It stupefies, and its effect upon the brain is to stagnate thought."

LESSON XII

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Sept. 11.—The fiery furnace.—Dan. 3:1-30. Tu.—He will deliver.—Job 5:17-27. Wed.—My salvation.—Psa. 27:1-14. Th.—Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace.—Isa. 26:1-10. Fr.—I am with thee.—Jer. 1:1-10. Sat.—I am with thee to save thee.—Jer. 15:11-21. Su.—Not forsaken.—Psa. 9:1-14.

DANIEL'S COMPANIONS IN THE FIERY FURNACE.—Dan. 3:1-30. *Print 3:13-28.*

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 17, 18)

SUPT.—13 Then Neb-u-chad-nez'zar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Sha'drach, Me'shach, and A-bed'-ne-go. Then they brought these men before the king.

School.—14 Neb-u-chad-nez'zar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Sha'drach, Me'shach, and A-bed'-ne-go, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?

15 Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?

16 Sha'drach, Me'shach, and A-bed'-ne-go, answered and said to the king, O Neb-u-chad-nez'zar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.

17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

18 But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

19 Then was Neb-u-chad-nez'zar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Sha'drach, Me'shach, and A-bed'-ne-go; therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.

20 And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Sha'drach, Me'shach, and A-bed'-ne-go, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.

21 Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

22 Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Sha'drach, Me'shach, and A-bed'-ne-go.

23 And these three men, Sha'drach, Me'shach, and A-bed'-ne-go, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

24 Then Neb-u-chad-nez'zar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.

25 He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

26 Then Neb-u-chad-nez'zar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Sha'drach, Me'shach, and A-bed'-ne-go, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Sha'drach, Me'shach, and A-bed'-ne-go, came forth of the midst of the fire.

27 And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.

28 Then Neb-u-chad-nez'zar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Sha'drach, Me'shach, and A-bed'-ne-go, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.

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13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Then they brought these men before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar answered and said unto them, Is it of purpose, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, that ye serve not my god, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? 15 Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made, well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that god that shall deliver you out of my hands? 16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer thee in this matter. 17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king. 18 But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

19 Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace seven times more than it was wont to be heated. 20 And he commanded certain mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. 21 Then these men were bound in their hosen, their tunics, and their mantles, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 22 Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. 23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

24 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste; he spake and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. 25 He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the aspect of the fourth is like a son of the gods. 26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace; he spake and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of the Most High God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego came forth out of the midst of the fire. 27 And the satraps, the deputies, and the governors, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, that the fire had no power upon their bodies, nor was the hair of their head singed, neither were their hosen changed, nor had the smell of fire passed on them.

28 Nebuchadnezzar spake and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and have yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? **School.**—The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. Heb. 13:6.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—The Christian hero can die but he will not do wrong.
TOPIC.—Religious faith tested.

OUTLINE.—I. A royal decree disregarded. II. A courageous answer. III. A marvelous deliverance.

TIME.—About B. C. 585.

PLACE.—Dura, near Babylon.

INTRODUCTION.—From fifteen to twenty years elapsed between the events of the preceding lesson and those of this. Daniel had been of great service to King Nebuchadnezzar in telling and interpreting the king's dream, and the magicians and wise men of Babylon had the greatest reason to be grateful to Daniel, inasmuch as he had been the means of preserving their lives. The king was brought to acknowledge the supremacy of Jehovah, and Daniel was advanced to the highest position in Babylon, second only to the king himself, in consequence of his ability to do what the wise men had utterly failed to accomplish.

COMMENTARY.—I. A ROYAL DECREE DISREGARDED (vs. 1-12). It is probable that the time of Nebuchadnezzar's erection of the great image here mentioned was upon his return from the conquest of Western Asia and Egypt, and his purpose was to celebrate his great victories. It is likely that the king thought that a public act of this kind would unify the various peoples of his world-empire, since all would do reverence to the same god. The image erected was ninety feet high and nine feet in width, but this may be supposed to include a pedestal from thirty to forty feet in height. The Colossus of Rhodes was fifteen feet higher than this image, and the statue of Liberty in New York harbor is three hundred six feet high including the pedestal. Nebuchadnezzar's image was in all probability a representation of the chief god of Babylon, Bel-Merodach, but it may have been an image of the king himself. The image was of gold, that is, covered with gold, for it is scarcely to be supposed that it was of solid gold, since it has been estimated that an image of that size would contain two billion dollars' worth of the precious metal. Some have fixed the site of the image at a point six or seven miles below Babylon where there is a solid structure, which may have been the pedestal of the image. Strict orders were sent to all the officers of the kingdom to be present at the dedication of the image, and all the people, of whatever language, were commanded to fall down to worship it. If any failed to comply they were to be burned alive.

II. A COURAGEOUS ANSWER (vs. 13-18). **13. rage and fury**—The hasty temper of the Oriental is proverbial. The king failed to consider the excellence of the men at whom he was enraged. **Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego**—The Hebrews who had received special training for the king's service, and who had refrained from defiling themselves with the king's meat and wine (Dan. 1: 8). The absence of Daniel from this narrative is variously explained. He may have been on government business in some remote part of the kingdom. Perhaps he was in such a high position that he was not included in the king's decree. It may be that although he was present and failed to bow the knee, no one reported him, his three companions being the chief objects of the people's envy. **14. is it true**—Can it be possible that any in my kingdom, and especially my officers, do not heed my decree when such fearful punishment as burning is the penalty for non-compliance? **15. if ye be ready**—The king desired to spare them and offered them another opportunity. **cornet**—A horn. **flute**—A wind instrument made of reeds. **sackbut**—A four-stringed instrument, having a sharp, clear tone. **Keil**, **psaltery**—An instrument like our lyre. **dulcimer**—A sort of bagpipe. **burning fiery furnace**—A form of punishment peculiar to the Babylonians, who is that God—"Who is

that god?"—R. V. Nebuchadnezzar had defied the gods of the nations which he had conquered, and came to believe that even the God of Israel could not withstand his might. **16. we are not careful**—"We have no need."—R. V. There was no anxiety on their part in this matter, in fact, their conduct had already indicated the course they would pursue. **17. if it be so, our God... is able to deliver us**—The Hebrews were certain that, if the king's threat was carried out and they were cast into the burning fiery furnace, God was able to deliver them even from that. They were assured that the king would have no power over them as against Jehovah's power. They were perfectly secure in God's hands. **18. but if not**—Even if God should not see fit to deliver them, we will not... worship the golden image—Their reply to the king was plain and positive.

III. A MARVELOUS DELIVERANCE (vs. 19-30). **19. form of his visage was changed**—The expression upon his countenance indicated fierce anger, one seven times more—"Seven times more."—R. V. The command implied that the furnace should be made as hot as possible. This order showed that the king was "full of fury." There was plenty of fuel at hand, as wood and pitch, to carry out the order. **20. mighty men**—Either men of high rank or men possessed of great strength. **21. bound**—The Hebrews were bound with fetters, presumably of metal, to insure against their escape. **coats... hosen**—"Coats" are the long undergarment; "hosen" is the cape that was thrown over the head and shoulders for protection from the sun.—*Tristram*. **furnace**—It was built of brick and had an opening at the top and also a door at the side. **22. slew those men**—The fact that the king's officers suffered death from the intense heat outside the furnace is a proof of the miraculous nature of the preservation of the Hebrews within the furnace. **23. fell down bound**—They were cast in through the opening at the top, and, being bound, were unable to walk.

24. the king was astonished—"Astonied" is the old form of the word "astonished." He evidently was sitting where he could view the proceedings and was alarmed at the sight of the three men unbound and walking in the furnace, and a fourth person with them. **counsellors**—High officers in the government. **25. like the Son of God**—"Like a son of the gods."—R. V. As Nebuchadnezzar knew that no ordinary person could survive such a heat he supposed the fourth form must be that of some deity. He knew nothing of Christ, so he surely could not have intended to say it was he. **26. came... and said**—The king's fury had given place to astonishment, and astonishment was giving place to admiring interest. **servants of the most high God**—An acknowledgment of the power of the true God. **27. the fire had no power**—Even the light, inflammable clothing which they wore was not singed, nor their hair, and the flames left no smell upon them.

QUESTIONS.—What decree did Nebuchadnezzar make? Describe the image which he set up. What was the penalty for not bowing down to the image? Who refused to worship the image? What efforts did the king make in their behalf? What was the answer given by the Hebrews to the king? What command did the king give regarding their punishment? Describe the scene that the king beheld after the young men were placed in the furnace. How did the king feel toward the Hebrews after they came out of the fire? What new decree did he make?

A Teaching Plan

I. **INTRODUCTORY.**—1. The connection traced. (1) Babylon the same place as in the preceding lesson. (2) Chiefly the same persons, excepting Daniel. (3) About twenty years later. 2. Intervening record. Nebuchadnezzar's dream told and interpreted by Daniel, who was therefore highly honored. 3. The absence of Daniel's name from the events of to-day's lesson not positively accounted for.

II. **THEME.**—The courage and faith of martyrs.

III. **AN UNRIGHTEOUS DECREE.**—1. Nebuchadnezzar was the head of a world-empire. 2. Had returned from great victories in the West. 3. Twofold purpose in erecting the great image. (1) To celebrate his achievements. (2) To unify the various nations and races in his kingdom. 4. The size, proportions and materials of the image. 5. Other great images or statues. 6. It was either a representation of a god or of the king. 7. The decree.

IV. **A COURAGEOUS REFUSAL.**—1. What it would have meant for those Jewish men to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's image. 2. The heathen could worship other gods besides those of their own country, but the Jews were forbidden to worship any but the true God. 3. The Hebrews' refusal to bow down reported to the king. 4. The king's offer to give them another chance. 5. The firm determination of the Hebrews and their unwavering faith in God are an example for us.

V. **A MIRACULOUS DELIVERANCE.**—1. Burning was a mode of execution employed in Babylon. 2. The furnace. 3. The intensity of the fire shown by the orders given regarding it and by the fate of the officers who put the Hebrews into the furnace. 4. The condition of the Hebrews upon entering the furnace. 5. Their condition in the fire. 6. Their condition upon coming out. 7. The effect of their marvelous preservation upon the king. 8. The secret of their deliverance was their submissive faith in God, who was with them. 9. The new decree issued by Nebuchadnezzar. 10. The influence of the heroic faith of the Hebrews upon succeeding generations. 11. Fiery furnaces of the past and present. 12. God's faithful ones have always made their escape either on the earth side or the heaven side.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Religious faith tested.

I. Idolatry against Jehovah-worship.

II. Martyrdom or surrender to compromise.

III. Heroism approved by divine attestation.

I. **Idolatry against Jehovah-worship.** The proclamation of Nebuchadnezzar was intended to consolidate the religion as well as the politics of the empire. Since many nations had been compelled to submit to him, he resolved that they should also worship his god. Viewed in the light of divine law, this proclamation was most tyrannical. It was a violent outrage on the most sacred rights of human beings. By it Nebuchadnezzar constituted himself supreme dictator in religion to his whole realm. In so doing he attempted to propagate religion by force, making "might the standard of right." That was religious intolerance. That Oriental despot was then in the zenith of his glory. He was the acknowledged master of the world. The command of authority could not tempt the three Hebrews to sin. They did not court martyrdom, but they were prepared for it. Nebuchadnezzar was obliged to recognize their right to religious liberty or at once suppress them. How little qualified was such a man to rule mighty nations, who had no rule over

his own spirit! That worm of the earth set himself in competition with Jehovah. In his haughtiness and bigotry he added rudeness and insolence to idolatry and challenged the might of the God of Israel. With the Hebrews their duty to God was stronger than their gratitude to the king. Their first consideration was not their prospects but their duty. They made religion a personal thing. They put eternal things before temporal. They were not mere Israelites in name. Their piety was more than an inheritance. They believed in God, in the truths which he had revealed to them and in the moral responsibilities he had placed upon them. They were worshippers of a true God in a heathen land. Their decision was absolute, because their duty was plain. They were a small number to appear for the Lord God of Israel in opposition to the idolatry of the king and the court and the empire of Babylon. Their faith was not speculative, but real. It dominated their lives and secured their glad service.

II. **Martyrdom or surrender to compromise.** The three Hebrews resisted sin but did not rebel against the king's penalty. As men of principle they did not depend upon being understood, but upon their knowledge of duty. Their great moral courage was born of great convictions. They preferred suffering to sin. They preferred martyrdom rather than the disapproval of God. Firm and decided for Jehovah, the three Hebrews approached the eventful spot. If the example of those noble young men at that crisis had been wanting, how evil would have been the consequences! As God's providence called for martyrs, he gave them grace. They believed that God would make all things work together for their good. Before an assembled multitude they were called to combat the confederated powers of darkness and to vindicate the insulted majesty of Jehovah. There was seen the contrast between spiritual and human greatness.

III. **Heroism approved by divine attestation.** To do right is to win. The means taken to extinguish truth was used to extend its influence. True principle ultimately triumphs. God did not spare the three Hebrews from the furnace, but he went with them into it and protected them there. The enraged king had power to put them into the fire, but he had no power to make it consume them. He was astonished at the number he beheld in the furnace. It was a wondrous sight, a fact on which he had not counted. God stood by his servants, baffled their opponents and gave them a glorious victory. He was revealed by means of the faithful Jews in a way that the heathen world might behold him. The Hebrews were not only preserved, but they were also the means of advancing the cause of true religion in Babylon. Many a disconsolate exile would be encouraged, and his faith strengthened. The living personality of the Son was established. The welfare of the captive Jews was promoted. The honor of the true God was greatly enhanced. T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

THEY WERE LIKE PURE GOLD.	MANY STILL SERVE THE GOD OF GOLD.
THEY STOOD THE TEST.	I WILL SERVE THE GOD OF HEAVEN.
EARTHLY PROMOTION AND HEAVENLY GLORY AWAITED THEM.	CHRIST WILL BE WITH US IN OUR FIERY TRIALS.

THE FOURTH IS LIKE
THE SON OF GOD

Practical Applications

Trust. "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter" (v. 16). These Hebrews did not offer to compromise. Parleying with sin would be fatal. They did not argue. They could not be moved from their purpose. They did not complain nor remonstrate nor seek a reversal of the decision. They saw the king was determined. They did not seek to justify themselves. Their standpoint would not be clearly seen by the king. An enraged heathen monarch could not understand how absolute to them was God's command, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image . . . thou shalt not bow down" (Exod. 20: 4, 5). They were not careful to answer. God would do that for them when the emergency came. "But if not . . . we will not" (v. 18). They would be true to God regardless of consequences. The proconsul said to Cyprian, "The emperor commands thee to sacrifice." "I am a Christian," was the resolute reply, "and I can not sacrifice to your gods; do therefore what you are commanded." Cyprian has had many illustrious followers in his determination to be true to his God in the face of death. Youths and maidens of tender years, men and women mature and thoughtful, and those far advanced in age have chosen to die martyrs' deaths rather than to dishonor God.

Presence of God. "The aspect of the fourth is like a son of the gods" (v. 25, R. V.). Whether the furnace be kindled by secret hate, or open persecution, or bitter oppression, or fierce temptation, or physical pain, or temporal loss, or sore bereavement, the form of the fourth is always present, for the promise is fulfilled, "I will be with him in trouble" (Psa. 91: 15). The proverb, "Troubles never come single," is true. Mark Guy Pearse says, "Every trouble brings God with it. When the child is well, the mother bids the nurse take care of the little one; keep it out of winds, and find the sunny path, and avoid the perils of the crowded street; but when the cheek is flushed, the head drops, the eyes are heavy, the hot breaths come and go quickly, then the little one can find no rest but in the mother's arms, and in the sound of her voice and her gentle touch. 'I will be with the little one to-night,' says the mother. Even so tender and pitiful is our God. 'I will be with him in trouble.' Angels may minister in a thousand gracious ways, but trouble makes us so sacred that God himself comes then to soothe and cheer us."

Preservation. "And the satraps, the deputies, and the governors, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, that the fire had no power upon their bodies, nor was the hair of their head singed . . . nor had the smell of fire passed on them" (v. 27, R. V.). Flames can not destroy our spiritual life nor burn our robes of righteousness. They are imperishable. The furnace can not consume, but will refine and multiply and brighten the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. We lose nothing in trial which is worth saving. Adherence to principle brings its reward. At the siege of Copenhagen, under Lord Nelson, a conscientious Quaker refused to fight or leave his dwelling. He spent the hour of the terrible battle in prayer for his home and his family. The siege went on. For days the flames did their fateful work throughout the whole city. Public buildings, manufactories, churches, the homes of the rich and the abodes of the poor were alike destroyed. After some days, when the smoke and flames had died away, there was found amid the ruin and desolation one humble dwelling unscorched and unharmed, the home of the Quaker Christian. God had sent his angel and delivered his trustful servant.

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—God is able to deliver his children.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

THE HEBREWS IN BABYLON
TRUE TRIUMPHANT
GOD'S HEROES

True. Review the story of Daniel and his three companions undergoing their preparation to stand before the king, and their appointment to high positions. They maintained their integrity during the many years between that event and the incidents of to-day's lesson. Tell the story of Nebuchadnezzar and the dream which he could not recall. Note the fact that Daniel called upon his companions to pray that he might be able to tell the king's dream and give the interpretation of it. God answered prayer and Daniel was given an exalted position. The four Hebrews were true to God in their youth and were true when they became men.

Tried. Give an account of the extent of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom and the many countries which he conquered. His desire to celebrate his victories led him to erect an enormous image designed to be worshiped by all of his people. To illustrate the size of the image, draw a line one-fourth of an inch long to represent a man, and one nearly four inches long to represent the image. Give a word-picture of the great image set up in the plain of Dura and the vast assembly of people gathered there from all parts of the kingdom. Describe the scene as, at the sound of the many instruments of music, all the people bowed down except the three Hebrews, whose Babylonian names were Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Tell of the king's offer to give them another chance to worship the image, and their willingness to die rather than to become idolaters.

Triumphant. The next story will be that of the preparation of the burning fiery furnace, the placing of the Hebrews in it and their remarkable preservation. Describe the dress and fetters of the three as they went into the fire. Show the intensity of the heat from the fact that the officers taking them to the door of the furnace were slain. Notice Nebuchadnezzar's surprise at what he saw as he looked through the furnace door at the Hebrews. Note the change in the king's feelings toward them as they came forth from the fire wholly unharmed. He had been in a "rage and fury;" now he was full of astonishment. He had decreed that any who would not bow down to his image should be slain; he now decreed that any who should speak against the God of the Hebrews should be put to death. He tried to burn the Hebrews, but could not, so he promoted them to higher positions.

God's heroes. Make the lesson practical by showing the children ways in which they can honor God by refusing to commit sins to which they are tempted. "A poor Indian maiden turned from idols to serve the living and true God. The heathen chiefs threatened to torture and burn her. With triumphant faith the defenseless girl exclaimed, 'If you burn me, my new Chief will go into the fire with me, and he and I shall laugh at the flames.'" The Christian, whether he is young or old, who resolutely obeys the Lord and honors him even when ridiculed and persecuted is God's hero.

LESSON XIII

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Sept. 18.—Daniel in the lions' den.—Dan. 6: 1-28. Tu.—Mouths of lions.—Heb. 11: 32-40. Wed.—Flames of fire.—Dan. 3: 1-30. Th.—Pharaoh vanquished.—Exod. 12: 21-35. Fr.—Israel saved.—Exod. 14: 10-31. Sat.—Sennacherib defeated.—2 Kings 19: 14-37. Su.—No need to fight.—2 Chron. 20: 5-30.

DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN.—Dan. 6: 1-28. Print 6: 10-23.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 21-23)

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SUPT.—10 Now when Dan'iel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Je-ru'-sa-lem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

School.—11 Then these men assembled, and found Dan'iel praying and making supplication before his God.

12 Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decrees; Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.

13 Then answered they and said before the king, That Dan'iel, which is of the children of the captivity of Ju'dah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day.

14 Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Dan'iel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him.

15 Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed.

16 Then the king commanded, and they brought Dan'iel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Dan'iel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.

17 And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Dan'iel.

18 Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting; neither were instruments of musick brought before him: and his sleep went from him.

19 Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions.

20 And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Dan'iel: and the king spake and said to Dan'iel, O Dan'iel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?

21 Then said Dan'iel unto the king, O king, live for ever.

22 My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him my innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.

23 Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Dan'iel up out of the den. So Dan'iel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? **School.**—The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. Psa. 34: 7.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—One should be faithful to God regardless of consequences.

TOPIC.—Prayer restricted by law.

OUTLINE.—I. A plot against Daniel. II. Faithful Daniel cast to the lions. III. Daniel delivered. IV. God's name magnified.

TIME.—About B. C. 538.

PLACE.—Babylon.

able position in the court of Babylon during the reigns of successive kings, and had continued even when the government passed from the Chaldeans to the Medes and Persians. Though a captive and of an alien race, he won his way to influence and power through his wisdom, and "because an excellent spirit was in him." The intervening records tell of his interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the tree, and his reading for Belshazzar the handwriting on the wall. His godly life during all those years proclaims to the ages the blessed possibility of being faithful to God under all circumstances.

INTRODUCTION.—Daniel had retained an honor-

COMMENTARY.—I. A PLOT AGAINST DANIEL.

(vs. 1-9). The place of Darius in this history is not clearly understood, but it is supposed that he was a ruler under Cyrus. Daniel's ability and integrity won for him a position of trust and honor. He was made the chief of the three presidents who were in charge of the one hundred twenty princes, or satraps, of as many provinces. Not only this, but the king had it in mind to place him over the entire realm, that he himself might be the further relieved of the duties of government. This preference shown to Daniel aroused the envy of the other officers of the king to such an extent that they determined to have him removed. They confessed his excellence in their inability to accuse him of remissness in his personal or official acts. It is very probable that he was valuable to the king because of his careful oversight of the royal revenues, thus preventing the other officers from enriching themselves at the king's expense. There was but one ground upon which they could bring an accusation against Daniel, and that was concerning his religion. This was, in fact, highly complimentary to him, in that they believed he was faithful to his God.

II. FAITHFUL DANIEL CAME TO THE LIONS (vs. 10-17). **10. Daniel knew**—He knew that the king's decrees were unalterable. He knew the import of the proclamation. He knew that, humanly speaking, death was inevitable if he remained true to God. **windows**—We must bear in mind that windows, such as we have, were then unknown. Those of that time were simply openings in the walls, either with permanent bars as a protection, or with lattice-work doors that could be opened or closed. **chamber**—An apartment raised above the flat roof of a house at one corner, or upon a tower-like annex to the building, with latticed windows, giving free circulation to the air.—*Cam. Bible*. **toward Jerusalem**—Solomon in his prayer at the dedication of the temple had asked the Lord to hear the prayers of his people when in captivity or in strange lands, if they should pray with their faces toward Jerusalem. The Jew was accustomed to pray with his face toward the temple. **kneeled**—An attitude indicating humility and earnestness. **three times a day**—At nine, twelve and three o'clock. The first and last were the hours of the daily sacrifices. **gave thanks**—There were faith, courage and submission in Daniel's heart as a basis for thankfulness under such circumstances. **as he did aforetime**—He made no display of his piety. He did exactly as he had done constantly. To have ceased to pray or to have hidden himself in prayer would have been to show disloyalty to God. **11. these men assembled**—They flocked together tumultuously, as the word signifies. They knew Daniel's hours of prayer, and eagerly came together to discover him in the act forbidden by the king's decree.

12. spake before the king—Daniel's enemies wished to secure the king's confirmation of the decree before they brought their charge against his highly respected officer. **according to the law . . . which altereth not**—The theory was that the king could make no mistake, and hence his decrees could not consistently be changed. **13. regardeth not thee . . . nor the decree**—For thirty days, according to the decree, the king, who was looked upon as a god, was to be the only one of whom any petition should be made. Daniel in making "his petition three times a day" was disregarding both the king and his decree. He acknowledged a higher law than that of man. He served the true God, and hence to refrain from praying to him as the decree provided would be to violate his conscience. **14. sore displeased with himself**—He discovered too late the trap that was set

for him. He had foolishly allowed his vanity to assert itself in his consenting to be the only object of worship for a month. **set his heart on Daniel to deliver him**—It has been suggested that a counter edict condemning the executioners of the former edict to a similar punishment with Daniel might have saved the king's honor. Compare Esth. 8: 11.—*Coburn*.

15. know, O king—There was a strong determination that the king should not fail to carry out the edict. **16. the king commanded**—A strange exhibition of the authority of a king and a god. While King Darius was being worshiped as a god he was at the mercy of conscienceless subjects, and compelled to do their bidding. **cast him into the den of lions**—It is probable that the lions were kept for the purpose of executing criminals. This speedy execution was in keeping with the customs of the times. The punishment must be inflicted the same day that sentence was pronounced. The den was a pit or dungeon, underground at least in part. **he will deliver thee**—These words were expressive of the king's desire and faith. Darius recognized in Daniel a godly man, who had been serving God "continually" before the wicked decree was made, and whom the decree did not prevent from serving God "continually."

III. DANIEL DELIVERED (vs. 18-23). **18. fasting**—The sadness of his heart took away his desire for food. **musick**—None of the ordinary pleasures of the king were desired, and his mind was too much troubled to sleep. **19. went in haste**—Two motives urged the king to make an early and hasty journey to the den of lions. 1. His love for Daniel. 2. The hope that he might still be alive.

20. lamentable voice—Deeply distressed and in an agony of anxiety. He cried out between hope and fear. **servant of the living God**—Darius borrowed this phrase from Daniel. God extorted from an idolater a confession of the truth.—*J., F. & B.* **is thy God . . . able**—Full of concern, he trembles to ask the question, fearing to be answered with the roaring of the lions after more prey.—*Com.* **21. O king, live for ever**—The common salutation in addressing a king. Daniel might have spoken in reproof to the king but did not. His sole thought was that God's glory had been set forth in his deliverance. **22. sent his angel**—Daniel had company in the den of lions. There was no music nor gladness in the palace, but celestial joy in the intercourse between Daniel and the angel in the den.—*Taylor*. **23. exceeding glad**—Because the purpose of the decree had been thwarted. **because he believed in his God**—The deliverance was attributed to faith in God.

IV. GOD'S NAME MAGNIFIED (vs. 24-28). The punishment of the accusers of Daniel was summary and effective. The deliverance of Daniel appears more marvelous when it is seen how fiercely the lions attacked the accusers of God's servant. The new decree of the king is in strange contrast to the one made shortly before. Its language is expressive of the king's high regard for the God who had wonderfully delivered Daniel.

QUESTIONS.—What king followed Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon? Of what nation was Darius king? What office did Daniel hold? Who plotted against Daniel's life? What decree did they persuade the king to make? What was Daniel's custom as to prayer? Why did he pray with his windows open toward Jerusalem? What effect did Daniel's sentence and punishment have upon the king? What faith did the king have? Describe Daniel's deliverance. What new decree did the king make?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. The three tests in the three lessons from Daniel. 2. Noble qualities of the four Hebrews manifested. 3. The events recorded in the fourth and fifth chapters. 4. The seventy years' captivity drawing to a close. 5. The supremacy of the Medes and Persians.

II. THEME.—Facing death to keep a clear conscience.

III. DANIEL PROMOTED.—1. Qualities in Daniel that made him a valuable officer in the kingdom. 2. The esteem in which he was held by a succession of kings of Babylon. 3. The position in which he was placed by Darius. 4. The honor which the king designed to confer upon Daniel.

IV. DANIEL ENVIED.—1. Why Daniel was envied. (1) Because of his nationality. A Hebrew. (2) Because of his religion. A Jew. (3) Because of his social position. A captive or slave. (4) Because of the high office given him. 2. Daniel's enemies. (1) Conspirators. (2) Possessed of a murderous spirit. (3) Deceptive. 3. The method of the conspiracy. 4. The king's vanity and short-sightedness.

V. DANIEL CONDEMNED.—1. A trap set to catch two. (1) The king. (2) Daniel. 2. Compare the bearing of Daniel when the plot was bared with that of Darius. 3. The persistency of the plotters. 4. The weakness of King Darius. 5. The penalty inflicted. 6. The faith expressed by Darius. 7. The nature of the punishment.

VI. DANIEL DELIVERED.—1. Compare Daniel and Darius as to the way they spent the night. 2. The marvelous nature of Daniel's preservation. 3. The lions did not act like themselves during the night, but they did in the morning. 4. The recognition of God's hand in Daniel's deliverance. 5. Imagine the consternation of Daniel's foes. 6. Their fate.

VII. DANIEL'S GOD MAGNIFIED.—1. The nature and purpose of the new decree issued by Darius. 2. Compare the two decrees included in the lesson. 3. The true God and his servant honored. 4. Points of similarity between the experience of the Hebrews in the previous lesson and that of Daniel in this.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Prayer restricted by law.

- I. To flatter and deceive King Darius.
- II. To secure the death of Daniel.

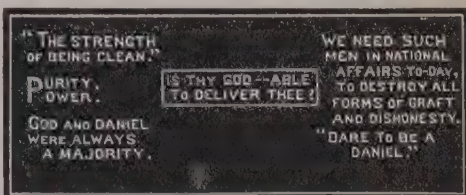
I. To flatter and deceive King Darius. A plot was planned and executed by a company of the highest and most influential officers of state under color of honoring the king, but in reality to ruin his favorite officer. Darius was proud of his position and power and they therefore attacked him on his weak side. They managed to bring the king into their iniquitous device and to entangle him in such a way that he would be compelled to sacrifice his favorite courtier or compromise his own truthfulness and violate the sacred traditions of the empire. A royal statute was framed and a decree published forbidding any petition to be asked of God or man for thirty days, except of King Darius. This law was designed to bring Daniel's piety and his patriotism into conflict. Upon their knowledge of his usual daily course of devotion the plot of his enemies was founded. They saw no remedy for their discontent except in procuring Daniel's ruin. Darius was a vain-glorious prince and without sufficient investigation signed the decree, seeing in it only compliment for himself designed by his high officers. Had he considered the full effect of such an arrangement, he would have known that Daniel had

no part in it, for Daniel had instructed Darius concerning his God. That edict invaded the rights of Jehovah. When it was revealed that the whole thing was a plot to destroy Daniel, the king was deeply distressed and in an agony of anxiety. He saw that he had acted a most unworthy, unkindly, unmanly part. He could only suffer self-contempt. The Persian law rendered him impotent. He had shown absolute power in decreeing evil, but found himself limited in doing good. When he sought to deliver Daniel, those designing enemies stood for the law, with no regard for life. They could not bear to see virtue rewarded, yet one of the highest eulogies ever paid to a man was pronounced upon Daniel by his enemies in that they could find no blemish in his life. They could only plot to cause the king to condemn him. They knew he was too true to his God to yield even to the order of the king. Daniel brought his religion into Babylon with him. He served his God without ostentation or concealment. He was not hardened by his captivity nor exalted by his honor. Faithful as Daniel was to the king, and attentive as he was to the interests of his kingdom, there was a point at which his obedience stopped. Bid him dishonor his God and he was at once inflexible. No love of worldly prosperity, no fear of human punishment had shaken him. These facts were known to his enemies, and only by intrigue could they hope to destroy his power.

II. To secure the death of Daniel. No doubt the whole scheme was plain to Daniel. He knew Darius and he knew the envy of the princes. He scorned to lower his standard in the presence of his foes. They did not expect he would. He made no alteration, took no notice of the decree. If their piety permitted them to set aside worship for convenience, his did not, for he served the one true and living God. His faith was steadfast, his composure unruffled, his conduct simple and artless. Daniel prayed just when and where and as he did aforetime. He was not asked to become an idolater, but simply to leave off praying for a month. If he would do that he would become a man no stronger or better than his enemies, and then they might hope to gain advantage in their position, which the honesty and uprightness of Daniel had prevented. If he would not surrender, they were sure that death would be his portion and so remove him from their way. Daniel's faith in God was too deep and strong to suffer any serious shock from spurious philosophy. To him, God was a living and reliable friend to whom he could take every difficulty, and in whom he could trust in every danger. With him there was more need of prayer during such a season. His people were laid upon his heart. They were looking to him for example and counsel. He still purposed in his heart not to dishonor God. With all the public duties of his office he needed the help gained through prayer. His public life was upright and beautiful because his inner life was devout and prayerful.

T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise



Practical Applications

Faithful unto death. "When Daniel knew" (v. 10) that his death warrant was signed, he went into his house and prayed. "When Daniel knew" in that awful crisis, "when he knew" that those cunning, far-seeing enemies had baited the trap with flattery and duplicity (Psa. 12: 2, 3) so skillfully that even the sagacious King Darius had snapped at it and been fooled; "when he knew" the devilish ingenuity and malignity with which his enemies had closed in upon him; "when he knew," is the shining line in the story; "when he knew" that the hell-hounds were sniffing about his door to detect his prayer; "when he knew" that if he prayed they would see him; "when he knew" that if they saw him a horrible peril awaited him,—he went into his house and prayed.

Faithful though persecuted. "The writing was signed" (v. 10). Daniel could not be corrupted and made to sin, so he must be persecuted and made to suffer. This is Satan's opportunity. The higher your spiritual position the more and mightier your enemies (Eph. 6: 12). To be "greatly beloved" of God is to be greatly hated by "the world" (John 15: 16-19). If because of faithfulness God has chosen and exalted you, those beneath you, the tools of Satan, will envy your position and power and seek in every way to destroy you. This is your opportunity to continue to be faithful.

Faithful in prayer. "He kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime" (v. 10). A. B. Simpson suggests, "Daniel was the premier of one hundred twenty provinces, some of these as large as England. He had more calls than the president of the United States, yet had time for prayer." There is a volume in those two words, "As aforetime." He did not pray any more because of the trouble nor any less. He just went on as aforetime, along the routine that he had planned. He prayed in the same place, at the same hours, with the same fervor. He had framed his life in the fear of God, and he was not going to deviate from it because a cross-current had struck him. Suppose a law were passed that for thirty days no one should pray under penalty of being thrown to lions, what would you do? Start on the first steamer for Europe? Or take a vacation from church, prayer-meeting and closet for a month? Or shut your doors and windows that no one might see you pray? Or pray silently lest some one should suspect you? Or would you take your accustomed place in the sanctuary and be faithful to the weekly service and at your family altar kneel without your blinds drawn and spend the same amount of time in the secret place you do now? Would you "dare to be a Daniel"?

Faithful and delivered. Faith in God brings us into trial, but it also keeps us in it and will always bring us out of it. A large number of Roman criminals were standing in the courtyard of their prison, chained together. Among them was one Christian man. His fellow-prisoners were jeering him, saying, "You are no better off than we. You are wearing the bracelets as we do. If your God is of any use why doesn't he knock off your chains and get you free?" The man replied reverently, "If the Lord will, he can set me free even now, and though my hands are chained my heart is free!" That moment a voice called his name, telling him that a paper had been received granting him full pardon. He was told to stand aside and his chains were struck off. The prisoners were awe-stricken with what they had witnessed.

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—It is better to face death in being faithful to God than to lead a prayerless life.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

Daniel

{ Envyed by enemies
Wickedly condemned
Miraculously delivered

JEHOVAH IS THE TRUE GOD

Daniel envied. Review the preceding lesson by asking questions to call forth the leading thoughts contained in it. Tell the story of Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the tree, and the story of the handwriting on the wall of Belshazzar's banquet-hall. Describe Daniel's position in the kingdom of the Medes and Persians at the opening of the present lesson. We commenced the study of Daniel when he was a boy of about fifteen years, but in this lesson he was a man eighty years old. He was loved and honored by Darius because of his ability and faithfulness. Show why the other officers of the king were envious of Daniel. God's faithful followers are sometimes hated by the wicked. Boys and girls have become envious of a schoolmate who was a better student than they. When a well-behaved child is commended for good conduct, the ill-behaved child is often envious. Those who are envious are not disposed to recognize true merit in others.

Daniel condemned. Let the children in turn tell you the story of the plot against Daniel. Call their attention to the confession which the plotters made that they could not find anything against his life or character, and they were sure that he would keep right on praying, even if his life was threatened if he continued to pray. Describe the feelings of the king and his efforts to rescue Daniel. Call attention to the faith of Darius in the God of Daniel. Casting criminals to lions was a common punishment in Babylon. Many of the early Christians were killed by being thrown to the lions.

Daniel delivered. Give two vivid pictures; one of the king in his beautiful palace, with everything that one could wish for, food, attendants, music and an elegant place to rest; the other, of Daniel in a dark pit, perhaps wholly underground, surrounded by a number of hungry and fierce lions, but calm, trustful, innocent and unharmed. Which one of the two men spent the more comfortable night? Why was the king miserable, and why was Daniel restful? Daniel could pray in his chamber with his windows opened toward Jerusalem, when he knew that the king's decree meant that he should be given to the lions, and he could pray among the lions, for their mouths were closed so that they could not harm him.

The true God acknowledged. Write on the board the principal parts of the decree of the king given in the first part of the lesson, and then write parts of the decree given at the close of the lesson. Compare the two and tell what made the difference in the king's two decrees. Show the children how much it would have dishonored God if Daniel had stopped praying to escape being cast to the lions. It is too bad that many have ceased to follow the Lord because some one ridiculed them. Daniel had a firm and noble purpose,



QUEEN ESTHER COMING TO THE KING

From, "Hurlbut's Story of the Bible."

The John C. Winston Co.

THE CAPTIVITY AND THE NEW NATION

In a broad sense the term, captivity of the Jews, includes all the different times in which the people of Israel were under the power of their enemies. There are six such occasions mentioned during the time of the judges (Judg. 3:8; 3:14; 4:3; 6:1; 10:8; 13:1). The term is also applied to the subjugation of the kingdom of Israel in B. C. 710 by Tiglath-pileser, the Assyrian, who carried away members of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, Manasseh and some others into his own land. Those remaining in Israel were placed under tribute to Assyria, and when they refused that tribute about twenty years later, Samaria, the capital, was besieged and taken, and the northern kingdom came to an end. In the narrower sense the captivity of the Jews designates the seventy years' captivity of the Jewish nation in Babylon from B. C. 606 to B. C. 536. This has been called the civil captivity of Judah, and the period from the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in B. C. 586 to the completion of the restored temple in B. C. 516 has been called the ecclesiastical captivity. There were three stages in the captivity of Judah. In B. C. 606 Nebuchadnezzar invaded the kingdom and carried away a few Jews, among whom were Daniel and his companions. Nebuchadnezzar came again in eight or nine years and took away 10,000 Jews (2 Kings 24:10-16). In B. C. 588 he once more invaded Judah and took Jerusalem after a siege of a year and a half.

While Nebuchadnezzar was the visible agent in the overthrow of the Jewish nation, the cause of that destruction lies far back of his time. The unbelief and disobedience of God's chosen people had been persistent and aggravating. God had shown longsuffering beyond all human comprehension. He had used every means possible to avert the threatened calamity. The lesser judgments visited upon the nation had not aroused the people to turn from idolatry, and therefore, at the last, Jehovah withdrew his restraining hand from Nebuchadnezzar and his armies and they of their own will accomplished the overthrow of Jerusalem which had long been threatened. It was a weary journey to distant Babylon, the place of their captivity. There was little hope that they would ever again see their beloved Zion, for the captivity was to be for seventy years, and their sadness was deepened by the knowledge that this had come to them as a punishment for their persistent transgression of God's law. The condition of the Jewish captives in Babylon was not as bad as it might have been. They were allowed to live in communities by themselves and were allowed to engage in business. They were not shut out of participation in the affairs of government, since Daniel and his companions and Esther were given places of importance and honor. Nevertheless the Jews were a captive people. They were in a strange land, a land of heathenism, removed far from the sacred city, the temple site and all the associations that made their home land dear to them. The Jewish captivity, however, had its uses, and not the least of these was the permanent cure of the Jews of the sin of idolatry.

As the captivity of Judah may be considered as made up of three stages, so also may be the return. In the fulness of time, according to prophecy, the decree of Cyrus was issued in B. C. 536, which allowed the Jews to return to their own land and rebuild the house of the Lord. At that time about 50,000 returned, led by Zerubbabel. In B. C. 458 a few thousand Jews returned from captivity under the leadership of Ezra. Thirteen years later a third company returned with Nehemiah. The task of reorganizing the nation and restoring the government and the religious system was no small one. The city had lain desolate for fifty years. Those who returned from captivity probably did not exceed 75,000. The amount of wealth brought back was not great. There was at times a feeling of discouragement among the people. It is sadly true that there was a lack of piety, as shown by their disposition to intermarry with outside nations and to violate the Sabbath. Another great obstacle in the way of establishing the new nation was the presence of enemies to hinder the work. With the earnestness and devotion of the leaders and the encouragement given by the prophets, the temple was finished in twenty years, and the walls of Jerusalem were completed.

LESSON I

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Sept. 25.—A watchman.—Ezek. 3: 1-27. Tu.—A rebellious house.—Ezek. 2: 1-10. Wed.—The watchman's duty.—Ezek. 33: 1-33. Th.—Jehovah ready to forgive.—Ezek. 18: 19-32. Fr.—Divinely appointed.—Isa. 21: 1-12. Sat.—Fidelity as a watchman.—Acts 20: 17-35. Su.—All things to all men.—1 Cor. 9: 16-27.

THE PROPHET EZEKIEL A WATCHMAN.—Ezek. 3: 1-27. Print 3: 12-21.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 17-19)

*AMERICAN REVISION

SUPT.—12 Then the spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing, saying, Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place.

School.—13 I heard also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels over against them, and a noise of a great rushing.

14 So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me.

15 Then I came to them of the captivity at Tel-a'bib, that dwelt by the river of Che'bar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days.

16 And it came to pass at the end of seven days, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

17 Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Is'ra-el: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.

18 When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

19 Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

20 Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die; because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

21 Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul.

12 Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me the voice of a great rushing, saying, Blessed be the glory of Jehovah from his place. 13 And I heard the noise of the wings of the living creatures as they touched one another, and the noise of the wheels beside them, even the noise of a great rushing. 14 So the Spirit lifted me up, and took me away; and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; and the hand of Jehovah was strong upon me. 15 Then I came to them of the captivity at Tel-abib, that dwelt by the river Cuebar, and to where they dwelt; and I sat there overwhelmed among them seven days.

16 And it came to pass at the end of seven days, that the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, 17 Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. 18 When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand. 19 Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. 20 Again, when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die; because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteous deeds which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thy hand. 21 Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning; and thou hast delivered thy soul.

* The American Revision, copyright 1901, by Thomas Nelson & Sons.

SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—Hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. Ezek. 3: 17.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—God makes his children watchmen to warn sinners of their danger.

TOPIC.—The uplifted life.

OUTLINE.—I. Ezekiel's commission. II. The message. III. A vision of the divine glory.

TIME.—Ezekiel began to prophesy about B. C. 593.

PLACES.—Chebar and Tel-abib in Babylonia.

PARALLEL ACCOUNT.—Ezek. 33: 7-16.

READ.—Ezek. 2, 3, 33.

INTRODUCTION.—Ezekiel was a prophet of the captivity, all of his prophetic career being spent in exile. Aside from the fact that his father's name was Buzi, we know nothing directly of his ancestry. He was taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in company with the captives deported at the time of Jehoiachin's imprisonment in B. C. 597. That captivity included the nobility and all the best of the people of Judah, and only the poorest of the Jews were left in the land (2 Kings 24: 14-16). Ezekiel was a priest, as we know from his prophecy (1: 3), and we infer from the character of those taken captive at that time, that he belonged to one of the leading priestly families. It is clear that he had a wife and dwelt in his home among his fellow captives (Ezek. 24: 18; 8: 1). He was emphatically a prophet of Israel, his prophecies pertaining almost exclusively to that nation. His prophetic career began in the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity (Ezek. 1: 2), six

or seven years before the complete captivity of the nation and the destruction of Jerusalem. The first part of his prophecy is devoted to the proclamation of the coming destruction of the nation. He is unsparing in his denunciation of the wickedness of God's chosen people, and vividly foretells their doom. The first twenty-four chapters of the book are taken up with prophecies of this kind. The prophet utters predictions of the restoration of Israel in the subsequent chapters, commencing this class of prophecies after the final captivity of the people. His prophecies are given in the form of visions, which are explained and applied. The first three chapters of Ezekiel have to do with the prophet's call to his work, his appointment to his field and the giving of the message. As Isaiah received a vision of the Lord and a preparation for his work (Isa. 6: 1-7), so Ezekiel had a vision of the glory of the Lord under the figure of a man sitting upon a throne, upborne by the four winged, living creatures and the swift moving chariot (Ezek. 1: 4-28), and was given directions as to the purpose and difficulties of his mission (Ezek. 2: 1-8). Ezekiel's language is highly figurative and poetic, and his prophecy is to the Old Testament what the Revelation of John is to the New.

COMMENTARY.—I. EZEKIEL'S COMMISSION (vs. 1-11). When the Lord had secured the attention of Ezekiel by the marvelous vision described in Ezek. 1, and had shown him his future work, he began to give him the preparation immediately essential to the prosecution of his mission. From the figure of his eating, at the command of God, the

roll handed to him (Ezek. 2:9, 10), we understand that he received the message which the Lord would have him deliver to his people. As the roll was sweet in his mouth, so there was a sense of satisfaction and blessing that grew out of his communication with God and the commission which he received from him. His appointment was to go to his own people, and not to strangers. The unfruitfulness of the field is revealed to him in the statement, "Surely had I sent thee to them [strangers], they would have hearkened unto thee. But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me" (vs. 6, 7). The prophet was given to understand that his words would be rejected because of the hardness of the people's hearts, but the promise was, "As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead" (v. 9). The fact that the people to whom he was sent were hard-hearted would by no means excuse him from delivering the message to them. "Thy people" must be told the words of Jehovah, "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." It would appear that the prophet was inclined to shrink from the difficult task before him.

II. THE MESSAGE (vs. 12-21). 12. the spirit took me up—As the vision was about to be withdrawn there came into the prophet's heart a strong impulse to enter upon his divinely appointed mission. **I heard behind me**—The chariot of Jehovah leaves at the same time as the prophet, and in the distance he hears the wings of the cherubim "kiss" [margin] each other, and the noise of the wheels "beside them" [R. V.], as they rush forward. **—Whedon. blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place**—This may have been an outburst of praise from the living creatures. By a change of one letter in the original it could be rendered, "I heard.... the voice of a great rushing when the glory of the Lord rose up from its place." **13. a great rushing**—As the chariot of Jehovah passed away.

14. took me away—From the scene of the vision toward the place of his labors. Thus Isaiah went from the place of his vision in the temple to the place of hard labor, and Paul went from the scene of his vision and enlightenment to his arduous work. **in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit**—The prophet was lifted up into sympathy with God and shared his righteous indignation against Israel.—*Davidson*. God's hand was urging him forward to denounce the sins of his people and to warn them of the approaching desolation.

15. I came to them of the captivity at Tel-abib—The Jews during the captivity were shown many favors. They were permitted to dwell in their own houses and to engage in various lines of business. There were then the Jewish quarters of the city as there are now. The prophet came to the place where many captives dwelt. Tel-abib can not be definitely located. The name means a hill, or mound, of corn-ears. **river of Chebar**—Pronounced, and sometimes spelled, Kebar. Probably not the Chabor, or Habor, two hundred miles north of Babylon, but a stream further south, and possibly an irrigating canal leading from the Euphrates. **I sat where they sat**—He identified himself with his fellow captives. **overwhelmed among them seven days (R. V.)**—The prophet had had a vision of God, he had received his commission and the message, and he had come to the people whose sins he was to rebuke, and against whose sins he was indignant. This people was his people, and perhaps he shrank from delivering God's message of wrath against them. Perhaps, as some writers suggest, he was not yet prepared to speak the message in the spirit in which it should

be spoken. **16. at the end of seven days**—The week was the first large division of time, and the long period of motionless silence expresses the strength of the prophet's emotions.—*Cam. Bible*. At that time the Lord spoke again urging his messenger to declare the truth, as terrible as it was.

17. son of man—Ezekiel is frequently addressed thus, the expression being used more than ninety times. He had recently seen a vision of Jehovah, and in contrast he was addressed as a child of man. With the withdrawal of the glorious vision he no doubt felt his human weakness. **I have made thee a watchman**—An additional figure is employed to impress the prophet's responsibility. As the watchman upon the walls of the city was expected to see any danger to which the inhabitants were exposed and should give timely and suitable warning, so the prophet, having been informed of the danger to which his people were exposed, was expected to give the warning divinely sent to them. The delay of the city's watchman in giving the alarm might result in the destruction of the city, so the prophet's continued delay might result in loss to the captives. In a most important sense every child of God is a watchman.

18. when I say unto the wicked—God bears the responsibility of giving the message and the prophet must bear the responsibility of delivering it. **shalt surely die**—The finally unrepentant are doomed to eternal death. **his blood.... at thine hand**—The sinner must die because of his sin, but the unfaithful watchman must suffer for his own neglect. **19. shall die in his iniquity**—His suffering will be the more intense because he persisted in his iniquity after being faithfully warned. **thou hast delivered thy soul**—The duty of the watchman is to give the warning faithfully, and then the responsibility of making an escape rests upon the individual warned. **20. turn from his righteousness**—God warns his children of their danger of falling away from him. **I lay a stumbling-block**—That is, I permit him to be tried, and to fall in the trial. God is repeatedly represented as doing things which he only permits to be done.—*Clarke*. **his righteousness.... shall not be remembered**—No matter how holy he may have been, it will avail him nothing if he turns away from God. **at thine hand**—If the prophet fails to warn a man who once was righteous but is now wicked, and he dies without repentance, he will be lost, and his blood will be upon the head of the silent watchman.—*Whedon*. **21. and he doth not sin**—This indicates how large an influence is wielded by a faithful watchman.

III. A VISION OF THE DIVINE GLORY (vs. 22-27). Through the discourse of Jehovah with Ezekiel, the prophet had come to realize his duty and responsibility, yet he needed another vision of the divine glory, and further preparation for the great task before him. He learned that he had power to declare the message, only as he was assisted by the Lord. He could be silent of his own volition, but he could not effectively deliver God's message without divine direction and assistance.

QUESTIONS.—Who was Ezekiel? In what period did he live? Where was he and in what condition when he received his call to enter upon his work as a prophet? What is meant by his eating the roll? To whom was he sent with a message? How would they be likely to receive his words? In what respect was the prophet to become a watchman? What responsibility was upon him as to warning the wicked? What is said of those once righteous who become wicked? In what sense are all Christians watchmen?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. Both Jewish kingdoms were now in captivity. 2. Nothing more is heard of the captives deported from the northern kingdom. 3. Daniel's experience in captivity. His responsibility for going into the den of lions. 4. Ezekiel and Daniel were the great prophets of the period of the captivity. 5. God's care for his people during the seventy years of their captivity. 6. Israel's social condition during the captivity.

II. THEME.—God makes all his children watchmen.

III. EZEKIEL'S CALL.—1. A study of Ezekiel. (1) His ancestry. (2) His social standing. (3) The time of his captivity. (4) His disposition. (5) His rank as a prophet. 2. The vision. (1) The place. (2) Its nature. (3) Its purpose. (4) Its effect upon him. 3. Ezekiel's willingness or unwillingness to undertake the task imposed upon him. 4. The need of the people to whom he was sent. 5. Other remarkable visions and calls in scripture.

IV. EZEKIEL'S MESSAGE.—1. A message of divine displeasure. 2. A message of warning. 3. A message to those who were reaping the bitter harvest of their own rebellious sowing. 4. A message which sank into the prophet's soul. 5. A message which required courage to deliver. 6. A message likely to be unheeded.

V. EZEKIEL A WATCHMAN.—1. The office of a watchman. 2. The qualifications necessary to constitute a good watchman. (1) Intelligence. (2) Devotion to his work. (3) An interest in those whom he should protect. (4) Watchfulness. (5) Courage. 3. Ezekiel's duty made impressive by his being styled a watchman. 4. Results of the labors of the faithful watchman. 5. The consequences of unfaithfulness and neglect on the part of the watchman. 6. Encouragements to discharge one's duty.

VI. GOD'S PEOPLE AS WATCHMEN.—1. The sense in which all are watchmen. 2. The call to those who should become in a higher sense watchmen, as ministers and missionaries. 3. The watchman's reward. (1) Present. (2) Future.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—The uplifted life.

I. Followed a thorough consecration.

II. Found expression in active service.

III. Was dependent upon strict obedience.

I. Followed a thorough consecration. Ezekiel lived during the stormy transition period of the Jewish race. Judah was in captivity as a chastisement for rebellion against God and the abuse of his prophets. God knew the degeneracy of those times, the corruption and obstinacy of the people, the hardness of their hearts against divine truth, and that they would use every method by words and looks to corrupt the prophet's heart, poison his thoughts and destroy his influence, yet God gave courage and assurance in proportion to the hardness and impudence of the people. He promised power sufficient to bear Ezekiel out in his work. He required decision and uprightness and readiness to act. It was a notable privilege to be a messenger of the Lord, but the commission brought with it much sorrow, for the tidings were sad and severe. The Lord required Ezekiel to receive into his mind and heart the revelations which were made to him without objecting to any part. He was to take in the meaning of it, understand it aright, admit it into his heart, apply it, be affected by it and be full of it. He must meditate on every part of the "roll"


that his judgment might be formed on it, his memory stored with it and his affections regulated by it. With what unction could Ezekiel preach when he had taken to his own mind and to his own heart and to his own conscience the word of God, both in its terrors and in its surpassing mercies! God thus sought to bring Ezekiel into close fellowship with himself. Perfect accord with the will of God turned the bitter into sweet. By being "lifted up" Ezekiel was brought into sympathy with God and man, and strengthened to do a very difficult work.

II. Found expression in active service. When Ezekiel rightly understood the roll, the word of God, he was no longer self-contained. He was overwhelmed with grief for the sins and miseries of his people and ready to be the bearer of a divine message for the correction and moral awakening of his countrymen. Under the mighty efficacy of the Spirit of God the prophet was brought to the execution of his office. He needed prudence, knowledge and divine grace to enable him to present God's truth in the most profitable manner and at the same time escape those snares which came in the performance of so difficult a task. In sending his message to Judah God sought to win them and draw them back into the path of rectitude or else by his word make them inexcusable for their sin. He made his prophets witnesses for or against their hearers. Ezekiel was to perform his duty without fear, because the fear of man disables and takes away liberty. Ezekiel's ministry was preeminently a ministry of penetration into character. His method was to deal closely and severely with conscience. He insisted upon the responsibility of the individual, which was surely contrary to the prevailing ideas of that time. He has been called "the prophet of personal responsibility." A corrective, stimulating message made his ministry a spiritual force to his hearers. He did not seek controversy or opposition, but the condition of things involved such. The people hated the things of God and therefore hated his prophet. Ezekiel could not do otherwise than stand opposed to the age in which he lived.

III. Was dependent upon strict obedience. In his uplifted life the prophet was brought into deep sympathy with the divine will and was fitted to do the Lord's work, yet Ezekiel would have forfeited the divine presence and protection had he suffered himself to be corrupted by the people. He was not to distort the message. He was not to amend the terms on which the Lord would deal with his rebellious subjects. He must demand that the people comply with God's word. The position of a watchman, though dangerous, was important in Judah. It was a great mercy that they should be given one who should hear from God and make known what he said concerning his people. Ezekiel was assured that God and angels would concur with the predictions he uttered.

T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

<p>WHO ARE THE WATCHMEN OF TO-DAY?</p> <p>THEIR TRUMPET SHOULD GIVE A CERTAIN SOUND.</p> <p>NO COMPROMISE WITH SIN.</p>	 <p>THE WATCHMAN</p>	<p>THEY SHOULD WARN THE RICH AS FAITHFULLY AS THE POOR.</p> <p>THIS LESSON TEACHES THE LAW OF MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITY.</p>
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Practical Applications

"The hand of the Lord was strong upon me" (v. 14). God's hand is indicative of power (Deut. 5: 15; Josh. 4: 24; Psa. 89: 13); it is therefore a victorious hand (Psa. 98: 1). It is a constantly effective and saving hand (Isa. 59: 1) and affords a place of absolute security (John 10: 29). Ezekiel realized that the call of God was upon him. A mission awaited him and the hand of the Lord was upon him, sending him forth to accomplish it. John, the Revelator, had a vision of Jesus (Rev. 1: 13-17) which overcame him to the extent that he "fell at his feet as dead," but the vision was simply preparatory to the call that was about to be given, as Peter had his vision (Acts 10: 9-16), and Paul had his (Acts 9: 1-22). Jesus "laid his right hand" upon John (Rev. 1: 17), encouraged him and appointed to him a work (Rev. 1: 19, 20). God puts his hand upon us to save us, to commission us, and to empower us for service.

"I have made thee a watchman" (v. 17). The idea of human agency in God's work is a prominent one in the scriptures. We are responsible for the moral well-being of those about us. Cain attempted to evade such responsibility by saying, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4: 9), and countless others have attempted to evade responsibility, but in vain. The fact of the necessity for watchmen implies danger. The existence of danger demands that steps be taken to guard against it. We may not be responsible for the existence of danger, but we are responsible for keeping ourselves away from it and warning others against it. The watchman is in a position to see, not only the danger that threatens, but also the persons or property that he is engaged to protect. A noted preacher of the last century said, "The exposition of future punishment in God's word is not to be regarded as a threat, but as a merciful declaration. If in the ocean of life over which we are bound to eternity there are these rocks and shoals, it is no cruelty to chart them down; it is an eminent and prominent mercy."

"His blood will I require at thy hand" (v. 18). God makes no impossible demands upon us. We can warn the ungodly of the evil of their course and the terrible consequences of a life of sin, but our efforts may not turn them to a right life. The warning having been faithfully given, the responsibility rests upon those who, although warned, rush onward to ruin. A company of youths may be rowing on the Niagara River above the falls, unheeding of their nearness to the rapids. A spectator may see them and observe their danger. If he fails to warn them and they are caught in the rapids and are hurled over the falls, he is responsible in large degree for their death. If he warns them and they disregard his words, going on in their course, and are swept to their death, he is not responsible. He has done his utmost to save them. "Thou hast delivered thy soul" (v. 21). Paul gives us a view of his earnestness in his work as a watchman. He says, "Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20: 31). The true watchman not only gives the necessary warning, but also adds earnest entreaty to the end that the sinner may turn from the evil and find peace with God. Ezekiel performed his work amid many discouragements, yet he was faithful in his mission and is therefore an example to us. It means much to live and act in such a way that the blood of lost souls shall not be required of us. The responsibility seems too great for us to bear, yet God supplies the needed grace.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—God calls people into his service for their own good and the good of others.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

A CALL TO SERVICE

EZEKIEL { A PROPHET
A WATCHMAN } To Israel

A call to service. Ezekiel was called to a service which seemed to him to be difficult. The people to whom he was sent were hard-hearted and it seemed that his work would be in vain. The story is told of an eminent minister who at one time was tempted to become discouraged because he saw little success in his work, and was almost on the point of giving it up. In the midst of his trial he had a peculiar dream. He seemed to be working with a pickax upon the top of a hard rock, which he was trying to break. After dealing blow after blow with as much strength as he could command, he ceased his efforts, and was about to give up his task. Just then a stranger appeared near him and said to him, "Are you going to stop work?" The reply was, "Yes," "Were you not appointed to this task?" "Yes, but I do not make any impression on the rock," was the answer. The stranger assured him that the work was his, but the results were not. The man began again to strike the rock with his pickax and it was broken in pieces at once. The prophet was appointed to his work by the Lord, and the results belonged to him. Missionaries have labored for years to gain one convert.

Ezekiel a prophet. Relate the story of Ezekiel's being taken into captivity, and the remarkable vision he had when the Lord was appointing him a prophet to the house of Israel. Ask the class to name several Old Testament prophets and let them tell some of the things which they did or suffered. Explain the condition of those who had already been brought to Babylon as captives, and the condition in which the sacred city of Jerusalem was at that time. The captives were dwelling together at a place called Tel-abib, to which the prophet was directed by the Spirit.

Ezekiel a watchman. Explain the difficult task that lay before the prophet. It was difficult for two reasons: 1. The people to whom he was sent were his fellow Jews, and it was hard for him to tell them the terrible sins of which they were guilty and the punishment that was to follow. 2. He knew they were hard-hearted and would be likely to disregard the message. Call upon the children to tell the duties of a watchman. After having made it clear what a watchman is, pass on to show how Ezekiel could be a watchman to the house of Israel. On a ship at sea it is quite necessary to have some one to stand constantly where he can see far ahead, to detect danger if there should be any. When an army is encamped it is necessary to have guards stationed about the camp to see that the enemy does not approach unnoticed. Explain the danger that we are in from the attacks of the enemy. The children can tell you something about watchmen now, whose duties are like those which were placed upon Ezekiel. Ask the children how they should treat ministers, teachers and others, who are trying to guard them from evil, and to lead them to Christ.

LESSON II

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Oct. 2.—Life-giving stream.—Ezek. 47:1-12. Tu.—A fountain shall come.—Joel 3:14-21. Wed.—A fountain opened.—Zech. 13:1-6. Th.—Forsaken the fountain.—Jer. 2:4-19. Fr.—The well of living water.—John 4:1-26. Sat.—A river making glad.—Psa. 46:1-11. Su.—River of water of life.—Rev. 22:1-5.

THE LIFE-GIVING STREAM.—Ezek. 47:1-12.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verse 9)

*AMERICAN REVISION

SUPT.—1 Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar.

School.—2 Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side.

3 And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles.

4 Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters were to the loins.

5 Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over.

6 And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river.

7 Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other.

8 Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed.

9 And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh.

10 And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it from En-ge'di even unto En-ge'la-im; they shall be a place to spread forth nets; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many.

11 But the miry places thereof and the marishes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt.

12 And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—Who-soever will, let him take the water of life freely. Rev. 22:17.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—The stream of gospel grace is within reach of all.

TOPIC.—The immeasurable gospel.

OUTLINE.—I. The source of the stream. II. An increasing stream. III. An efficacious stream.

TIME.—About B. C. 572.

PLACE.—Tel-abib, in Babylonia, by the river Chebar.

READ.—Rev. 22:1-5.

INTRODUCTION.—The vision which constitutes the present lesson came to Ezekiel about fourteen years after the destruction of Jerusalem. Its purpose was to

1 And he brought me back unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward (for the forefront of the house was toward the east); and the waters came down from under, from the right side of the house, on the south of the altar. 2 Then he brought me out by the way of the gate northward, and led me round by the way without unto the outer gate, by the way of the gate that looketh toward the east; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side.

3 When the man went forth eastward with the line in his hand, he measured a thousand cubits, and he caused me to pass through the waters, waters that were to the ankles. 4 Again he measured a thousand, and caused me to pass through the waters, waters that were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and caused me to pass through the waters, waters that were to the loins. 5 Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass through; for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed through.

6 And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the bank of the river. 7 Now when I had returned, behold, upon the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. 8 Then said he unto me, These waters issue forth toward the eastern region, and shall go down into the Arabah; and they shall go toward the sea; into the sea shall the waters go which were made to issue forth; and the waters shall be healed. 9 And it shall come to pass, that every living creature which swarmeth, in every place whither the rivers come, shall live; and there shall be a very great multitude of fish; for these waters are come thither, and the waters of the sea shall be healed, and everything shall live whithersoever the river cometh. 10 And it shall come to pass, that fishers shall stand by it: from En-ge'di even unto En-ge'lain shall be a place for the spreading of nets; their fish shall be after their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many. 11 But the miry places thereof, and the marshes thereof, shall not be healed; they shall be given up to salt. 12 And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow every tree for food, whose leaf shall not wither, neither shall the fruit thereof fail; it shall bring forth new fruit every month, because the waters thereof issue out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for food, and the leaf thereof for healing.

cheer the Jewish captives in Babylon with the prospect of a return to Jerusalem, which city should be restored and become the center of spiritual life and power. It is also a most striking prophecy of the coming and mission of the Messiah. Its imagery is lofty and portrays a most blessed condition in the realm of grace. The long residence of the prophet as a captive in heathen Babylon did not prevent his receiving divinely sent visions any more than did John's banishment to Patmos. For a sketch of Ezekiel and his work see the Introduction to the preceding lesson.

COMMENTARY.—I. THE SOURCE OF THE STREAM (vs. 1, 2). 1. afterward.—Ezekiel had been taken in his vision to Jerusalem, had been shown the temple, rebuilt, and the details of the temple service had been explained to him. he

brought me again—The prophet's guide is described in Ezek. 40: 1-3. The return to the door of the temple was not to survey the building and study its appointments, but to behold a vision of the life-giving stream issuing from it. **unto the door of the house**—The entrance to the temple. **waters issued out from under the threshold**—In the prophet's vision the stream, which represented the manifold blessings of the gospel, had its source in the visible dwelling-place of Jehovah. The temple faced the east and the stream, issuing from the right side of the house, flowed eastward at the south side of the altar, which was in the center of the inner court. The only stream actually existing there was from "a fountain connected with the temple hill, the waters of which fell into the valley east of the city and made their way toward the sea."—*Davidson*. It was a "small stream, whose 'soft-flowing' waters were already regarded as a symbol of the silent and unobtrusive influence of the divine presence in Israel (Isa. 8: 6). The waters of this stream flowed eastward, but they were too scanty to have any appreciable effect on the fertility of the region through which it passed."—*Skinner*. The stream which Ezekiel saw flowed apparently from underneath the most holy place in the temple and passed near the altar of sacrifice. The waters signified "the gospel of Christ which went forth from Jerusalem and spread into the countries about, and the gifts and powers of the Holy Spirit accompanying it by virtue of which it spread far and produced blessed results."—*Henry*. **2. the gate northward**—The gate looking eastward was closed as explained in Ezek. 44: 2 and 46: 1. When the prophet reached the outer eastern gate he saw the stream flowing forth from the right, or south side of it. His vision regarding the source of the stream is strikingly like that which John saw (Rev. 22: 1). God is the source of all the good that comes to men. "Every good gift.... cometh down from the Father of lights" (James 1: 17).

II. AN INCREASING STREAM (vs. 3-5). 3. the man that had the line—The prophet's guide. See note on v. 1. **a thousand cubits**—About one-third of a mile. The distances measured are only important as they indicate the rapid increase in the volume of the stream. **the waters were to the ankles**—It was as yet an insignificant stream in size, but important on account of its source. **4. to the knees.... to the loins**—This shows a marvelous increase in volume. The stream received no tributaries, hence the increase was due to its inherent energy. There is an energy in the gospel all its own. **5. a river**—We are reminded of the language of Ps. 46: 4, "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." A river is majestic in its onward sweep. Its course can not be stayed. Barriers may be thrown in its way, but it overflows them or sweeps them away. Some earthly streams are periodical in their flow; sometimes the banks are full, and at other times the channel is dry. The stream that Ezekiel saw is unceasing in its flow. It is a type of the progress of Christianity. At the time of Christ's ascension there was but a handful of his followers. Their number has been constantly increasing until to-day there are five hundred million professed Christians in the world, and their number has increased nearly threefold during the past century. The stream of Ezekiel's vision is also a type of the grace of God in the soul. It is comparatively small in its beginnings, but its increase is constant as one trustfully obeys the Lord.

III. AN EFFICACIOUS STREAM (vs. 6-12). 6. hast thou seen this—The prophet's attention had thus

far been directed to the source of the stream and its marvelous increase. The next revelation was the effects upon the region through which it passed.

7. many trees—Compare Rev. 22: 2. The stream was conducive to fruitfulness. **8. go down into the desert**—The region between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea was a desolate waste, but in his vision the prophet saw the land fruitful because of the flow of the river through it. **the waters shall be healed**—The waters of the Dead Sea are so impregnated with various salts that fish can not live in them. Its waters were rendered wholesome by the inflowing of the healing stream. This is typical of the work of the Holy Spirit. **9. every thing.... shall live**—Life and salvation shall continually accompany the preaching of the gospel; the death of sin being removed, the life of righteousness shall be brought in.—*Clarke*. **multitude of fish**—The Dead Sea has become a sea of life. Out of death there arises, by the grace of God, a rich life. The sea is a symbol of the world; accordingly men appear as the living creatures in the sea, as the fishes. Hitherto they were only dead fishes, unspiritual, unsaved men.—*Lange*. **10. Engedi.... En-eglain**—The former at the west side of the Dead Sea, and the latter at the north end, where the Jordan enters. The expression includes the entire sea, whose waters were healed and abounded in fish of many kinds. Where the gospel is received it brings life and fruitfulness. No community is so corrupt, no individual heart is so depraved, that it will not be savingly affected by the inflowing of the stream of divine grace. **11. marshes—Marshes. shall not be healed**—The gospel is the only healing medicine for the disorders of our fallen nature, and they who will not receive it in the love of it remain incurable and are abandoned to final ruin.—*Benson*. The salt comes into consideration here, not as seasoning, but as the foe of fertility, life and prosperity. The thought is this: Only those who bar themselves against the gracious stream of divine love and are unwilling to regain health are henceforth to be given over to the curse, continuing to exist as monuments thereof. Around the sea of death there lingers on a death unto death.—*Klief*. **12. trees for meat**—Salvation must present itself for the terribly sick heathen world, above all, in the form of saving grace. Besides the nourishing fruits thereof, are named also the healing leaves. The figure of the fish refers to the extent, the greatness of the community; this figure of the trees to its nature, in so far as the divine grace transforms it into truly living members, who themselves bear rich food and thereby become a means of life and recovery to others also.—*Lange*. **fruit according to his months**—"This signifies a constant disposition, desire, resolution and endeavor to bear fruit, not in their own wisdom, power or goodness, or any goodness in themselves, but by the continual supplies of divine grace. Whoever may be the instrument of planting them, it is divine grace which gives the increase." **leaf thereof for medicine**—Even the leaves, the holy profession of the righteous, is a spiritual medicine. Righteousness is thus encouraged in the world.—*Clarke*.

QUESTIONS.—Who was Ezekiel? When did he prophesy? Where? What can you say of the book of Ezekiel? What is described in this lesson? What is represented by the river? By the trees? The fish? The fishers? The Dead Sea? Who are represented by the miry places and marshes? What shall become of such? What is meant by trees for meat? By leaves for medicine? To what time did this vision point?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. Connect the present lesson with the preceding one. Each contains a vision. (1) Seen by Ezekiel. (2) In Babylon. (3) One pointing to the destruction of Jerusalem, the other to its restoration. 2. A series of visions pertaining to the temple and its service. 3. The time of this vision. 4. The encouragement such a vision as this would bring to a nation in captivity.

II. THEME.—The river of salvation.

III. THE STREAM IN EZEKIEL'S VISION.—1. The prophet was under angelic guidance. 2. He was brought "in the visions of God" "into the land of Israel" (Ezek. 40:1, 2). 3. The source of the stream. It came from underneath the temple. 4. The direction of the stream. Eastward. 5. Its progress and enlargement. 6. It traversed a most barren region. 7. It flowed into a body of bitter water. 8. The transformation wrought along its course. 9. Its effects upon the Dead Sea waters.

IV. THE SOURCE OF THE RIVER OF SALVATION.—1. God himself is its source. 2. The fountain opened to the house of David (Zech. 13:1). 3. The fountain opened on Calvary. 4. The water that Jesus gives (John 4:14). 5. The river in John's vision (Rev. 22:1).

V. THE EFFICACY OF THE RIVER.—1. Water as a purifying agency. 2. Water as a life-sustaining agency. 3. The stream of gospel grace imparts spiritual life. 4. Moral deserts blossom as the stream approaches. 5. The Oriental mind could appreciate the blessings of abundant water. 6. The transformation of hearts and communities where the benefits of this stream are received. 7. The benefits increase in the hearts and lives of those who avail themselves of them.

VI. THE STREAM IS ACCESSIBLE.—1. Like the stream in Ezekiel's vision, the river of salvation flows through earth's desert places. 2. It flows within the reach of all. 3. An effort necessary to secure its benefits. 4. No power outside of ourselves can keep us from it. 5. To be obtained without money and without price.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—The immeasurable gospel.

- I. Contemplated in prophetic vision.
- II. Proportioned to meet human need.
- III. Destined to overthrow sin's power.

I. Contemplated in prophetic vision. God is ever enlarging and ennobling the outlook of man. The remarkable vision which is here described to us is exceedingly reassuring. Ezekiel's vision refers to the gospel under the figure of a river, a singularly appropriate blessing. His beautiful representation of the healing stream rests partly on natural and partly on spiritual conceptions common in his day. The vision was designed to represent the nature, origin, progress and results of the gospel; the exceeding great extension of the kingdom of Christ toward the four corners of the earth; the different degrees in the measure of the Spirit to which the nations shall gradually attain.

II. Proportioned to meet human need. The rise and progress of the gospel, its purifying and transforming power as Ezekiel saw it, was an assurance to him that God's kingdom should not utterly fall, though the generation to whom he prophesied was "impudent and hardhearted." Christianity is not a human invention, but a divine revelation. In it God "bowed the heavens, and came down." God's ideal is that blessings of his

presence should continually and rapidly increase and that Christ's kingdom should swiftly grow. Sin pervades humanity and only by the coming down from above of the purer source of life can it be cast out. The power of the gospel touches the heart, moves the affections, changes the nature and renews the entire being. The river ran to the east, that is, up-hill. The gospel runs against the bent of human depravity and carries all opposition before it. It makes for the sea, the Dead Sea, the desolation of the depraved soul, to purify it. Man untaught or unmoved by revelation is like the desert, uncultivated and unfruitful, or like the Dead Sea, devoid of spiritual activity and buoyancy and fitted but to spread around him the poisonous exhalations of his native depravity. Wherever the gospel goes it carries life and growth and fruit with it. Its waters have a quickening and life-giving power and a healing virtue. As the river itself is pure, so it promotes purity. What the waters do not heal they petrify. The longer a soul remains unchanged under the light of the gospel with its persuasive power the more hardened it becomes. God is constantly measuring the rise of the waters in the soul. There is great responsibility in being permitted to come in touch with the life-giving stream. The privilege of sounding the depths of divine things, of measuring the extent of God's love to mankind, of coming in touch with the saving power of his grace is provided through the sacrifice of Christ, the channel of mercy to the sons of men.

III. Destined to overthrow sin's power. Spiritual power does not lessen with time. The river irresistibly increased flowing eastward, an intimation that, by the gospel, idolatry shall be overthrown. The symbol was realized when the knowledge of salvation, no longer confined to the Hebrews, was communicated to the Gentiles, with marked success, and provision made for its extension to men of every kindred and tongue. Christianity shall redeem, heal and vitalize humanity. The gospel brings satisfaction, fruitfulness and permanence of spiritual life. The continual productiveness resulting from the perennial stream is the ideal for the individual life as well as for the church. Wherever hearts are kept open for the inflow of divine grace, the entire year will be their season of fruit-bearing. Blossoms and fruit will hang together at the same time. "Fishers of men" will be the natural occupation. No Spirit-filled life abides alone. Others are touched by its force and example. Spiritual health and happiness attract the sin-sick soul. The ultimate triumph of the gospel awaits the activity of the fishermen. When believers go beyond the ankle depth into "the waters to swim in" there will be more fruitfulness in personal life and greater ingathering of souls from heretofore unfavorable localities. The marvelous progress since the day of Pentecost is an assurance of greater extension and greater achievements.

T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

<p>THIS LIFE-GIVING STREAM IS THE GOSPEL.</p> <p>IT WAS SMALL IN THE BEGINNING.</p> <p>IT IS GROWING, AND IS DESTINED TO FILL THE WORLD.</p>		<p>WHAT CAN I DO TO AID ITS FLOW?</p> <p>I CAN SET A GOOD EXAMPLE.</p> <p>GIVE OF MY MEANS.</p> <p>PRAY FOR ITS SPREAD.</p>
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Practical Applications

"Water issued out from under the threshold of the house" (v. 1). Water is a type of spiritual life, the gift of God the Father (John 4: 10); God the Son (John 4: 14), and God the Holy Spirit (Isa. 44: 3; John 7: 38, 39). The word of God is the instrument God uses to purify or to satisfy us (Ezek. 36: 25; Eph. 5: 26; Isa. 55: 1; Rev. 22: 17). Water is necessary to human life, health and happiness (Isa. 41: 17; Zech. 9: 11). There is no spiritual life, health or happiness apart from God (John 6: 63; 17: 3). The waters come from the sanctuary. Purity and satisfaction flow from God to man, "whether in Eden, the garden of the Lord (Gen. 2: 10), or in the dry and weary wilderness" (Isa. 35: 6, 7).

"The waters came down" (v. 1). The way from God to man is always "down," whether man be living under conscience (Gen. 11: 5), under law (Exod. 19: 20), in captivity (Dan. 4: 13), or under grace (John 3: 13; 6: 38, 41, 51, 58). "The waters came... from... the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar" (v. 1). The "right" way is the bright way. The righteous shine here (Matt. 5: 14-16) and hereafter (Dan. 12: 3; Matt. 13: 43). Facing the east the right side is toward the south, the place of warm devotion. "The waters came down from... the altar" (v. 1). Type of Calvary, the place of sacrifice. From the wounded side flowed blood and water (John 19: 34). The place of sacrifice is the place of salvation. To believe in him who came "by water and blood" (1 John 5: 6) is to overcome by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of our testimony (Rev. 12: 11).

"Then brought he me" (v. 2). "He brought me" (v. 3). Salvation is all from God. All the way it is a "gift" to receive. It is "by grace... not of works" (Eph. 2: 8, 9). If we will "let God" (Rom. 3: 4; Psa. 68: 1), he will lead us on to his "utmost" salvation (Heb. 7: 25), even to the "salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

"The waters were to the ancles" (v. 3). This suggests spiritual advancement. One of the first things a child learns is to walk. Life precedes walking. The child of God begins fully to walk by faith (2 Cor. 5: 7), in newness of life (Rom. 6: 4), to walk in good works (Eph. 2: 10), walk circumspectly (Eph. 5: 15), honestly (1 Thess. 4: 12); then goes on to walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5: 16), and walk after the Spirit (Rom. 8: 4); and live always in the consciousness of God's presence.

"The waters were to the knees" (v. 4). Water knee-deep speaks of spiritual worship (1 Kings 8: 54; Dan. 6: 10). George W. McCalla, in his "Rising of the Waters," says, "True worship is not only in the Spirit, but according to the truth (John 4: 24). Knee-deep waters have to do with sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth (2 Thess. 2: 13); with those who accept Christ as their teacher, as well as their sanctifier; who have not only purity of heart, but are 'filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding' (Col. 1: 9). Many take the Spirit as the purifier who know him not as instructor; receive him as the comforter, but refuse him as the guide into all truth (John 16: 13). Only a Spirit-given knowledge of the truth gives liberty. Unless the Spirit enlightens us we can not distinguish the truth of God from traditions of men (Mark 7: 7)."

"For the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over" (v. 5). This is the deep place where Christ is all and in all (Col. 3: 11). No limit, no measure; unfathomable, impassable,

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—There is life for all who partake of the stream of salvation.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

THE WATER OF LIFE ITS SOURCE ITS POWER ITS NEARNESS

The water of life. Contrast the vision of the preceding lesson and that of the present lesson. Note Ezekiel's mission as a prophet to his people about to suffer the loss of Jerusalem and their country, and his mission in the present lesson to the captives whose city was to be restored, and whose King was to come. Describe the prophet being taken in his vision to Jerusalem, and the view that was given him of the restored temple and the stream that flowed from it. Draw an outline map of Jerusalem, and within it draw an outline of the temple facing the east. Mark the course of the waters of the prophet's vision past the south side of the altar, on past the outer gate to the valley of the Kidron and through the desert to the Dead Sea. Make a mark representing the stream becoming larger and larger as it proceeds eastward. Indicate the trees on both banks, and note the fact that they bear fruit, and indicate fishermen at the Dead Sea catching fish. Explain the nature of the waters of the sea. They are so salt that fish can not live in them, and it was because of the stream from the temple flowing into it that they were made healthful for fish.

Its source. As the stream of the vision flowed from the temple of God at Jerusalem, so the river of the water of life is given to the world by the Lord himself. Explain that the stream which brings salvation to the world was provided through the death of Christ. Tell the story of Christ at the well of Samaria. Describe the condition of those who are in heathen darkness, and explain that their sad state exists because the people are trying to be satisfied without the blessings that come from the great stream of salvation. In fact many of the heathen do not know about it.

Its power. Contrast the most godly man of whom the children know with the most wicked man, and show that the one has received the benefits of the water of life and the other has not. All the blessings that come to earth come as a result of the stream of salvation. Refer to the fact that plants, shrubs and trees wither and die without water, and that drooping leaves begin to show freshness and vigor when water is put upon the roots of the plants. The dry regions of the West are changed into productive lands by constructing irrigation systems. The water of life brings cleansing from sin, and produces spiritual life in the soul.

Its nearness. How far is it from where you live to a river? In some places people have to go long distances to find water, and there the value of water is appreciated. The water of life is within reach of every one. Explain the two invitations given in Isa. 55: 1 and Rev. 22: 17. Give reasons why many people do not avail themselves of the benefits of the stream of gospel grace. They are proud. They think it is too much of an effort to repent and thus make their way to the river of the water of life.

LESSON III

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Oct. 9.—Out of captivity.—Ezra 1:1-11; 2:64-70. Tu.—God's word to Cyrus.—Isa. 45:1-13. Wed.—A shepherd.—Isa. 44:21-28. Th.—Word of God by Cyrus.—2 Chron. 36:22, 23. Fr.—Word by Jeremiah.—Jer. 25:1-14. Sat.—Word again by Jeremiah.—Jer. 29:1-14. Su.—Prophecy by Ezekiel.—Ezek. 37:1-28.

THE RETURN FROM THE CAPTIVITY.—Ezra 1:1-11; 2:64-70. Print 1:1-11.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 1:3, 4)

*AMERICAN REVISION

SUPT.—1 Now in the first year of Cy'rus king of Per'sia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jer-e-mi'ah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cy'rus king of Per'sia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

School.—2 Thus saith Cy'rus king of Per'sia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Je-ru'sa-lem, which is in Ju'dah.

3 Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Je-ru'sa-lem, which is in Ju'dah, and build the house of the Lord God of Is'ra-el, (he is the God,) which is in Je-ru'sa-lem.

4 And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the free will offering for the house of God that is in Je-ru'sa-lem.

5 Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Ju'dah and Ben'ja-min, and the priests, and the Le'vites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Je-ru'sa-lem.

6 And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered.

7 Also Cy'rus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the Lord, which Neb-u-chad-nez'zar had brought forth out of Je-ru'sa-lem, and had put them in the house of his gods;

8 Even those did Cy'rus king of Per'sia bring forth by the hand of Mith're-dath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Shesh-baz'zar, the prince of Ju'dah.

9 And this is the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine and twenty knives,

10 Thirty basons of gold, silver basons of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand.

11 All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Shesh-baz'zar bring up with them of the captivity that were brought up from Bab'y-lon unto Je-ru'sa-lem.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? **School.**—He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. Mic. 7:18.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—God deals with his people in great mercy.

TOPIC.—A new epoch for Judah.

OUTLINE.—I. The proclamation of Cyrus. II. Preparation to return. III. The numbers returning.

TIME.—B. C. 536.

PLACES.—Babylon; Jerusalem.

READ.—Ezra 1, 2.

INTRODUCTION.—The book of Ezra is closely related to the book of Chronicles and is a continuation of the history therein contained. The scribes who arranged the Hebrew scriptures considered that Ezra and Nehemiah were one book. The first six chapters give the history of the first return from the Babylonish captivity and incidents during the subsequent twenty years, B. C. 536 to B. C. 516. The remaining chapters describe Ezra's taking a company of Jews from Babylon to Jerusalem and other events in his life, there being a gap of more than fifty years between the history given in the first part and that recorded in the second. The book covers a period of about eighty years and describes more completely than any other portion

1 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, 2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath Jehovah, the God of heaven, given me; and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. 3 Whosoever there is among you of all his people, his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of Jehovah, the God of Israel (he is God), which is in Jerusalem. 4 And whosoever is left, in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the freewill-offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.

5 Then rose up the heads of fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, even all whose spirit God had stirred to go up to build the house of Jehovah which is in Jerusalem. 6 And all they that were round about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, besides all that was willingly offered. 7 Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of Jehovah, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put in the house of his gods; 8 even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah. 9 And this is the number of them: thirty platters of gold, a thousand platters of silver, nine and twenty knives, 10 thirty bowls of gold, silver bowls of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand. 11 All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up, when they of the captivity were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem.

of scripture the return of the Jews from captivity and the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. Ezra, the author of the book bearing his name, was a scribe and belonged to the tribe of Levi. He was born about B. C. 500, and was a devout worshiper of Jehovah. He became prominent through his work in arranging the Hebrew scriptures and through his successful labors in the reorganization of the Jewish state.

The return from captivity marks an epoch in Jewish history. The captivity, its duration and the return had been a subject of prophecy. The reason for the overthrow of the Hebrew state had been clearly declared. It was a punishment for national idolatry and disobedience to God's laws. The punishment was both retributive and remedial. The nation had sinned and must suffer. The Jews had gone wrong and must be set right. The captivity commenced with the subjugation of Jehoiakim in B. C. 606, and was completed with the destruction of Jerusalem in B. C. 586. The return from the captivity began in B. C. 536, seventy years after the first deportation of captives to Babylon, and the rebuilding of the temple was completed in B. C. 516, seventy years after its destruction. This captivity in Babylon effected a complete cure of idolatry. In all of Jewish history since that time we find nothing of a return to heathen worship. The penalty was severe but it was justified by the results.

COMMENTARY.—I. THE PROCLAMATION OF

CYRUS (vs. 1-4). 1. the first year of Cyrus—This was his first year as king over the whole realm, including the recently acquired countries. Babylon was conquered B. C. 538 and for two years was ruled by Cyrus through Darius. Cyrus was the ruler of a world-kingdom. **fulfilled—**The prophecy is recorded in Jer. 25: 12 and 29: 10, and declares the return of the captives after seventy years. **the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus—**There was probably a twofold influence brought to bear upon Cyrus. He was moved directly by the Spirit of the Lord, and it is likely that Daniel, who continued "in the reign of Cyrus" (Dan. 6: 28), called the king's attention to the prophecy of Jeremiah. The prophets of the captivity, and especially Ezekiel, had been preparing the way for the return by fervent exhortations to turn to the Lord, and by prophecies of the restoration of the Jewish state and of the blessings that were in store for the people of Israel. **in writing—**The proclamation was sent by heralds among the Jewish captives and was also put in writing that it might be preserved among the records of the nation. A tablet and a cylinder have been found on which are inscriptions recording Cyrus' part in the restoration of the Jews to their own country. **2. the Lord God of heaven—**Cyrus acknowledged Jehovah the God of Israel. **all the kingdoms of the earth—**Including Media, Persia, Assyria, Babylon, Lydia, Syria and Palestine. **build him an house at Jerusalem—**He believed the prophecies which had been uttered concerning him. "The end in view was neither social nor political, but purely religious. The exiles return as a people of God. The goal of their pilgrimage is a holy site. The one work they are to aim at achieving is to further the worship of their God."—*Nicoll*.

3. who is there among you—The privilege of a return to Judah was freely offered for their acceptance. It became a test of their devotion. The best of the people of the Jews had been taken into captivity. There had been a seventy years' test to prove their devotion to Jehovah, and at the close of those years the opportunity was given to them to endure the hardships of a journey to Jerusalem and the labors incident to building up again the temple and city which had lain in decay all those years. **let him go up—**The policy of Nebuchadnezzar had been to carry to Babylon the best of the people whom he conquered in his campaigns, lest they should rebel against him in case he left them in their own land; but Cyrus preferred to return the captives to their respective countries and rule over them with such consideration that they would become his loyal supporters. **4. let the men of his place help—**It is estimated that not more than one in six of the Jews returned to Jerusalem. Some were too old and infirm to make the journey, while others were unwilling to go on account of the financial sacrifice that would be involved. These classes were exhorted by the king to aid those who would go, that the house of God might be rebuilt and the nation might be reestablished. They were called upon to give willingly as well as abundantly. The cause was one that should have appealed to every descendant of Jacob. The house of God was the one visible token that bound the nation together. It was the one object toward which every loyal Jew turned when he prayed. It was for the most sacred purpose on earth to the son of Israel that the people were urged to contribute. The exhortation to make contributions was not without effect, for an account is later given of the treasure bestowed for the rebuilding of the temple.

II. PREPARATION TO RETURN (vs. 5-11). 5. chief

of the fathers—The heads of families and the leaders among the Jews. The tribes of Judah and Benjamin are definitely mentioned, but it is certain that representatives of the other tribes were included in the number that returned. **whose spirit God had stirred (R. V.)—**The people were susceptible to the influence of the Holy Spirit, and were moved to assist in the building of the house of Jehovah. **6. all they that were about them—**This would include their heathen neighbors and friends as well as Jewish. **precious things—**Whatever would be of service on the journey or could be employed in the very important work of building the temple. **7. the vessels of the house of the Lord—**"Nebuchadnezzar little thought he was preserving the sacred vessels of Israel in a safe and inviolable stronghold, till the day when Jehovah would bring about their restoration to his people." Some of these vessels had been profaned by Belshazzar on that night when Babylon was taken and Belshazzar slain.—*Whedon*. **8. Sheshbazzar—**The Chaldee or Persian name of Zerubbabel, given him at court as other names were given to Daniel and his friends. He was born in Babylon and named by his friends Zerubbabel, which means "exile in Babylon." He was recognized as hereditary prince of Judah; was leader of the first company of exiles, and director of the rebuilding of the temple. **11. all the vessels—**This number, 5,400, is more than double the sum in verses 9 and 10, which was 2,499. "It is probable that only the larger or more costly vessels were numbered in detail, and the 5,400 includes a great number of smaller and less costly ones. So they are reckoned by Josephus." In the history of the restoration of the Jews to their own country, the names of three Jewish leaders and of three Persians are prominent. The first Jewish leader was Zerubbabel, who left Babylon under this proclamation of Cyrus, B. C. 536, seventy years after the first captivity. After an interval of about twenty years he was enabled to complete the rebuilding of the temple, in the reign of Darius Hystaspes, seventy years after the destruction of the temple. The second Jewish leader was Ezra, who went up from Babylon about eighty years after Zerubbabel, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus. He labored chiefly to restore the institutions of Moses. The third Jewish leader was Nehemiah, who went up from Susa, or Shushan, in the twentieth year of the same Artaxerxes. He rebuilt the wall and set up the gates of Jerusalem and promoted many reforms.—*Blakie*.

III. THE NUMBERS RETURNING (vs. 64-70). The total number of the people who undertook the return to Judah was about fifty thousand. Rawlinson says, "By far the greater number, and especially those of the wealthier classes, preferred to remain behind, to hold the property which they had acquired, and pursue the avocations to which they were accustomed on a foreign, but now friendly, soil." That the people were not permitted to set out from Babylon empty-handed is evident from the fact that, after they arrived at Jerusalem, they were able to contribute toward the rebuilding of the temple from four hundred thousand to five hundred thousand dollars in gold and silver.

QUESTIONS.—How many years had the Jews been in exile? What king declared their freedom? What prophets had foretold this event? How were the people provided for on their journey? Who was their leader? What were they going to do in Jerusalem? What precious vessels were restored to them? Who was the prophet at this time? Who was the author of this lesson? What good had the captivity worked to the Jews? How many returned?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. The relation of this lesson to the preceding. (1) As to time. (2) As to events. 2. A study of Ezra. (1) His ancestry. (2) His office. 3. The book of Ezra. (1) Its relation to other books. (2) Its main divisions. 4. God's hand in the affairs of Israel.

II. THEME.—Deliverance for captives.

III. PROPHECIES OF DELIVERANCE.—1. Isaiah foretold it (10: 21; 45: 1-4, 13). 2. Jeremiah foretold the duration of the captivity (25: 12; 29: 10). 3. Ezekiel urged the captives to find spiritual life and a preparation for deliverance from captivity (11: 13-20; 36: 21-24). 4. In Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones is a prophecy of the return (37: 1-14).

IV. DELIVERANCE PROCLAIMED.—1. The first captivity took place B. C. 606 and the complete captivity B. C. 586. 2. Cyrus' decree was issued B. C. 536. 3. Cyrus. (1) His nationality. (2) His conquests. (3) His dominion. (4) His character as a man and a ruler. (5) His religious policy. 4. Reasons for his making his memorable proclamation to the captives. 5. The distinctive object in the return of the Jews to Jerusalem. 6. The manner of issuing the proclamation. 7. The sense in which Cyrus was a servant of the God of Israel.

V. PREPARATION FOR THE RETURN.—1. The distance to be passed over to reach the land of Judah. 2. The ways in which the returning Jews were to be assisted. 3. The return was a voluntary act on the part of the people. 4. Motives leading to the return. 5. Inducements to remain in Babylon. 6. The exodus from Egypt compared with the return from Babylonian captivity. 7. The blessing attending the return.

VI. A SUCCESSFUL RETURN.—1. Zerubbabel, or Sheshbazzar, was the leader of the return. 2. The numbers of those who returned at this time. 3. The beasts provided. 4. The treasure carried. 5. The contributions toward rebuilding the temple. 6. Practical lessons from this deliverance. (1) Captivity is because of sin. (2) Liberty has been provided and proclaimed. (3) There must be a desire for liberty and a determined effort to secure it. (4) Separation and faith are conditions. (5) Devotion to the cause of God.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—A new epoch for Judah.

I. Introduced under providential guidance.

II. Identified by their return to Jerusalem.

I. Introduced under providential guidance. God, in his providences, performs in due order all the prophecies of his word. His sovereignty is the key to all the mysteries in providence and grace. It was contrary to ancient custom for any considerable body of men to be set free from slavery without some cause which was extraordinary. Slaves, the captives of war, were national stock. Therefore in the edict of Cyrus and the return of the Jews from Babylon to Jerusalem we have an uncommon event in history. God selected a pagan king whose appointment had been foretold by the prophet Isaiah about two hundred years before. In his proclamation is exhibited the suitable response of man to the influence of God. The measure of the sins of Babylon, under whom Judah was captive, was at length full. It was then that destruction was brought on them and the Babylonian kingdom became subject to Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian. All this had to come to pass before Cyrus could release the captive Jews.

The captivity was for an appointed time of seventy years, and God was not forgetful of the time or his promise to his people. His "due time" never fails. The captivity was not wholly retributive. It was a season of discipline. It was God's judgment upon his people for their sins, but it was a judgment so tempered with mercy that it brought them much blessing in the way of spiritual development. Their trials became a means of spiritual discipline. The contempt heaped upon their religious belief strengthened their constancy. While in their own land they had neglected the sacred worship of the temple and the observance of God's law and had practised idolatry, regardless of all the entreaties and warnings of the prophets. In Babylon they were humbled in the presence of unrestrained heathenism. They yearned for true devotion in the Lord's sanctuary. In the absence of the temple they instituted the synagogue as a place of worship. They learned to value the scriptures as they had not before. Their hearts were more closely knit together. The schism between Judah and Israel was healed and the temple at Jerusalem became the common center of unity to those who had been formerly separated as rivals and enemies, and they were joined together under the name Jews.

II. Identified by their return to Jerusalem. The release from captivity was an assurance of the divine forgiveness of their sins and the commencement of many great blessings. The discouragements to return were many and great, the journey long, their own land a strange land to most of them. Jerusalem was in ruins in the midst of enemies. The difficulties, hardships and perils were manifest. Even the spiritual advantages would not be realized fully while that generation lived. To engage in rebuilding the temple, the city and its enclosure for the purpose of promoting true worship, required vigorous faith, lively hope and an active zeal for the honor of God and the benefit of his church in the years to follow. The return to Jerusalem did not include the reorganization of a political commonwealth, but rather the reestablishment of the temple and its worship. Notwithstanding all the difficulties God filled them with a true ambition for liberty, a gracious affection for their own land and a desire for the free and public exercise of their religion. He put it into their hearts to set their faces Zionward. Being a new generation in most part, they went out like Abraham, not knowing whither they went. Though a difficult outlook on the surface, it was practicable. Help was promised by Cyrus and means furnished. Cyrus, the divinely directed deliverer, expressed in his proclamation his reverence toward God and his kindness toward the captives. His words, "His God be with him," were as a prayer for guidance and guardianship on the journey with all success in their undertaking. The restoration of the sacred vessels was a fulfilment of prophecy, a restoration of perverted things to their right use. T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

<p>THERE WAS JOY AMONG THE CAPTIVES.</p> <p>50,000 EMANCIPATED SLAVES</p> <p>HOMEWARD BOUND, WITH LIGHT HEARTS.</p>		<p>THE PARDONED SINNER'S JOY IS EVEN GREATER.</p> <p>THERE IS A GLAD HOME COMING FOR GOD'S CHILDREN.</p> <p>MAY WE ALL BE AMONG THE GOOD.</p>
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Practical Applications

Promise. "That the word of the Lord....might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up.... Cyrus" (v. 1). Two hundred years previously God named this king and declared his will concerning him. He "saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid" (Isa. 44: 28). "By the mouth of Jeremiah" God had declared to the captives, "After seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end" (Jer. 29: 10, 11). Centuries before Jesus came it was written of him, "His name shall be called Wonderful" (Isa. 9: 6), and there were prophecies of him (Isa. 61: 1-3).

Profession. "Cyrus king of Persia" (v. 2), was not only a type of Christ, but of every Christian of whom it may be said, "Thou....hast professed a good profession before many witnesses" (1 Tim. 6: 12). His profession betokened: 1. God's goodness. This king begins his proclamation with Jehovah's name and declares that this "Lord God of heaven hath given" him "all the kingdoms of the earth" (v. 2). Christ always "witnessed a good confession" (1 Tim. 6: 13). He always acknowledged his Father's goodness. 2. God's authority. "He hath charged me to build him an house" (v. 2). Daniel no doubt showed Cyrus the word he was to fulfil and the work God had given him to do. Loyally and royally did he fulfil the charge. The ambassador of Christ, delivering any message, should be always able to say as he did, "The Lord....hath anointed me," "He....sent me" (Luke 4: 18; John 6: 39, 40). 3. God's greatness. This God of heaven, who gives and commands, and to whose authority he bows, is "the Lord God of Israel, (he is the God)" (v. 3).

Permission. 1. Definite. "Who is there among you of all his people....let him go" (v. 3; 2 Chron. 36: 23). It was addressed to all Israel. The gospel proclamation is, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come" (Isa. 55: 1). "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden" (Matt. 11: 28). 2. Gracious. "Let him go up....and build the house of the Lord" (v. 3). This was the great want (vs. 2-7). This was the answer to their soul longings. The captives wept when they remembered Zion (Psa. 137: 1, 5). They prayed with their windows open "toward Jerusalem" (Dan. 6: 10). For them there could be no true deliverance without the temple and no real restoration of Israel without Jerusalem (Psa. 122: 1-9). The gospel is man's great want. The soul longing for God can never be satisfied with aught but himself. 3. Cordial. "His God be with him and let him go up" (v. 3). Cyrus not only ransomed them, but he gave them his blessing.

Performance. We may strengthen the hands (v. 6) of those who labor; be "labourers together with God" (1 Cor. 3: 9). 1. Daniel in exile having discovered "by the books" that God had fixed the period of seventy years for the desolation of Jerusalem, humbled himself and confessed his sins and the sins of his people, and supplicated the fulfilment of the promise. 2. With silver and gold (v. 4). If all the old cast-off jewelry were to be brought out and sold and the money used for benevolence, how the hearts of many, burdened for lack of means to carry on their work, would be lightened. 3. With what you have. Those who had no money might help "with goods and with beasts." A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—We may all be made free from captivity to Satan.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH

{ Why?
Where?
How long?
How ended?

LIBERTY FOR US

Why captives? It will be necessary to tell many times during this year the reasons why the people of Judah were made captives. In connection with the story, tell the work that Ezekiel did for the Jews while they were captives, by way of a review of the preceding lesson. Emphasize the fact that they became captives through their forsaking the Lord and being disobedient. Prophets were sent to reprove them, but they would not listen to them. Explain to the class what it means to be in captivity to Satan. Little acts of disobedience lead to greater ones, and the habit of wrongdoing becomes fastened upon one.

Where and how long? Have a map to show the location of Babylon and its direction and distance from Jerusalem. Tell the story of the prodigal son, showing how he came to go away and the condition in which he soon found himself. Satan is a cruel master and he will hold us in his power unless we call upon God for deliverance. The children may be able to tell how long the Jews were captives in Babylon. It was longer than the lifetime of most people.

How ended? Tell the story of the part King Cyrus took in bringing about the return of the Jews to Jerusalem. It was foretold by Isaiah two hundred years before this time that he would give them liberty to go to their own land. It was a long journey and there was need of money and provisions. The temple must be rebuilt and money was needed for that also. The king gave for that purpose and urged those who stayed in Babylon to give also, and the result was that much treasure was given. Impress the duty of liberality toward God's cause. Some think they would give if they had it, but they may be like the poor workman who said, "If I were only rich, I would show people how to give." He dreamed of seeing a perfect pyramid of silver dollars. There were thousands of them, new and bright. He seemed to hear a voice saying, "Now let us see you give." He went to the pyramid of dollars to take some to give to charity, and walked about it looking for a plate to take some out without marring the pyramid. He could not find a place where one could be spared without breaking the beauty of his pile, and decided not to break it. Upon awaking he found that if he was not generous when he was poor, he would not give liberally if he should become rich.

Liberty for us. We are not slaves in the sense of being the property of masters who have full power over us physically, but unless Jesus has set our souls at liberty we are captives of Satan. Mention a few sins that are common among children, such as pride, deception, disobedience to parents, and show how they bring one into captivity. A greater King than Cyrus has proclaimed liberty to Satan's captives.

LESSON IV

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Oct. 16.—Laying foundations.—Ezra 3:1-13. Tu.—Stopped by enemies.—Ezra 4:1-24. Wed.—Call of Haggai to resume building.—Hag. 1:1-15. Th.—Latter glory.—Hag. 2:1-23. Fr.—By my Spirit.—Zech. 4:1-14. Sat.—Building of the temple resumed.—Ezra 5:1-17. Su.—Temple dedicated.—Ezra 6:1-22.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE SECOND TEMPLE LAID.—Ezra 3:1-4:5. Print 3:8-4:5.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verse 3:11)

*AMERICAN REVISION

SUPT.—8 Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Je-ru-sa-lem, in the second month, began Ze-rub'-ba-bel the son of She-al'-ti-el, and Jesh'-u-a the son of Jo'-za-dak, and the remnant of their brethren the priests and the Le'-vites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Je-ru-sa-lem; and appointed the Le'-vites, from twenty years old and upward, to set forward the work of the house of the Lord.

School.—9 Then stood Jesh'-u-a with his sons and his brethren, Kad'-mi-el and his sons, the sons of Ju'-dah, together, to set forward the workmen in the house of God: the sons of Hen-a'-dad, with their sons and their brethren the Le'-vites.

10 And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Le'-vites the sons of A'saph with cymbals, to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of Da'-vid king of Is'-ra-el.

11 And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Is'-ra-el. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.

12 But many of the priests and Le'-vites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy:

13 So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.

14 Now when the adversaries of Ju'-dah and Ben'-ja-min heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the Lord God of Is'-ra-el;

2 Then they came to Ze-rub'-ba-bel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of E'sar-had'-don king of As'-sur, which brought us up hither.

3 But Ze-rub'-ba-bel, and Jesh'-u-a, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Is'-ra-el, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Is'-ra-el, as king Cy'-rus the king of Per'-sia hath commanded us.

4 Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Ju'-dah, and troubled them in building,

5 And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cy'-rus king of Per'-sia, even until the reign of Da'-ri-us king of Per'-sia.

8 Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the rest of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem, and appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to have the oversight of the work of the house of Jehovah. 9 Then stood Jeshua with his sons and his brethren, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together, to have the oversight of the workmen in the house of God: the sons of Henadad, with their sons and their brethren the Levites. 10 And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of Jehovah, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise Jehovah, after the order of David king of Israel. 11 And they sang one to another in praising and giving thanks unto Jehovah, saying, For he is good, for his lovingkindness endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised Jehovah, because the foundation of the house of Jehovah was laid. 12 But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses, the old men that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: 13 so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.

1 Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity were building a temple unto Jehovah, the God of Israel; 2 then they drew near to Zerubbabel, and to the heads of fathers' houses, and said unto them, Let us build with you; for we seek your God, as ye do; and we sacrifice unto him since the days of Easaraddon king of Assyria, who brought us up hither. 3 But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of fathers' houses of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us in building a house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto Jehovah, the God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us. 4 Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, 5 and hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? **School.**—Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise. Psa. 100:4.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—It is a privilege to have part in the pure worship of God.

TOPIC.—Foundation principles.

OUTLINE.—I. The worship of God restored. II. The foundation of the temple laid. III. The work of building hindered.

TIME.—Foundation laid B. C. 535; temple completed B. C. 516.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

READ.—Ezra 4:24-6:22.

INTRODUCTION.—The Jews left Babylon B. C. 536, probably in the spring, and arrived in Judah in mid-

summer. The first few months were occupied in providing places in which to live about Jerusalem. The prospects were far from inviting as they looked upon the sacred temple hill and its surroundings, lying in desolation. However, the returned exiles were comforted with the thought that they were in the land which God had given them, and they were soon to enjoy the reorganized state, and the renewed temple service.

COMMENTARY.—I. THE WORSHIP OF GOD RESTORED (vs. 1-7). In the seventh month, our October, after the people had become settled in the several small cities about Jerusalem, an assembly of all the Jews was held in the sacred city for the purpose of reestablishing the worship of Jehovah. The leaders in this movement were Jeshua, the priest,

and Zerubbabel, the governor. It would of necessity be a long time before the house of the Lord could be completed and used as a place of worship, hence, in order that the sacrifices might at once be offered, the altar was erected upon the foundation where the former altar had stood. The altar was the essential part of the equipment of Jewish worship. Upon this were offered the several sacrifices designated by the Mosaic law, consisting of the daily offerings, the offerings of the new moons and the set feasts, as also the free-will offerings. The feast of Tabernacles was observed in its season, which occurred about the time of the erection of the altar. When the religious services had become regularly established, attention was at once given to the work of rebuilding the temple. Stone for building purposes was on the ground amid the ruins of the city, but timber must be secured at a distance. The Sidonians and the Tyrians were engaged to transport cedars from Lebanon, since Cyrus had given permission to obtain them from that source.

II. THE FOUNDATION OF THE TEMPLE LAID (VS. 8-13). **8. the second year.... the second month**—The company of Jews had reached Jerusalem in July, B. C. 536, and preparations were made for laying the foundation in May, B. C. 535. **that were come out of the captivity**—About fifty thousand persons. **to set forward the work**—The Levites were given the oversight of the great work for which Cyrus had given the Jews permission to return to Jerusalem. **9. Jeshua**—A Levite, not the priest mentioned in the preceding verse. An honor is placed upon those to whom was entrusted this important work, in that their names are preserved for all time. They were given the responsibility because of their fitness for the work. **10. laid the foundation**—This was an occasion for impressive ceremonies. It marked an epoch in Jewish history. It pointed backward to the dark past. It pointed forward to a bright future for God's chosen and restored people. **priests in their apparel**—The priestly garments are described in Exod. 39. They denoted the consecration of the wearers to sacred service. **with trumpets**—These were used in calling the people together. **sons of Asaph**—Descendants of Levi. They were prominent as singers in the temple service. **to praise the Lord**—It was an occasion which should call forth the strongest expressions of thankfulness. **after the ordinance of David**—See 1 Chron. 6:31; 15:16-21; 16:4-6; 25:1. **11. they sang together by course**—"They sang one to another."—R. V. They may have sung responsively, one company saying, "The Lord is good," and the other, "For his mercy endureth for ever." They had an exhibition of his great mercy in their restoration to their own land and in the renewal of the worship of Jehovah. **shouted with a great shout**—The rejoicing was occasioned by the realization that God was faithful to his promise, and that the nation, which had so long been without a temple of Jehovah, was to be blessed with a visible dwelling-place for the Most High.

12. many.... that had seen the first house—It had been about fifty-two years since the destruction of the first temple, and the final deportation of the Jews to Babylon, and some of those who returned with Zerubbabel to Jerusalem could easily remember the former temple. **when the foundation of this house was laid.... wept**—They saw that the glory had departed from Israel; in their circumstances it was impossible to build such a house as the first temple was; and had this been even possible, still it would have been greatly inferior, because it wanted the ark of the covenant, the heavenly

fire, the mercy-seat, the heavenly manna, Aaron's rod that budded, the divine Shekinah, the spirit of prophecy, and most probably the Urim and Thummim.—*Clarke*. Not that this second temple was not a very grand and beautiful structure, but how great soever its material splendor, it was inferior in this respect to that of Solomon. Yet the glory of the second far outshone that of the first temple in another and more important point of view, namely, the receiving within its walls the incarnate Savior (Hag. 2:9).—*J., F. & B.* Some have supposed that the weeping was for joy, but this is not probable.

13. could not discern—In the East the people are very demonstrative in their expressions of joy and sorrow, and commonly the wails of grief are mistaken for shouts of joy. Sorrow and joy were closely mingled on this occasion, and both were in consequence of what God had done for his people, either in the past or at that time. It is well to remember the former days of blessing and to be thankful for them, but it is unprofitable to dwell upon them to the discredit of the present or the future.

III. THE WORK OF BUILDING HINDERED (VS. 1-5.)

1. adversaries of Judah and Benjamin—They were the people who had been settled in Samaria by the Assyrians after the captivity of the northern kingdom, and consequently had been in the land nearly two centuries. There were mingled with them the descendants of the ten tribes, forming a mixed race. **2. let us build with you: for we seek your God**—It appears that the request was made with the object of picking a quarrel with the returned Jews. Their claim that they were worshiping Jehovah was largely false. Their religion was a mixture of heathen observances and the calf worship instituted by Jeroboam. "They feared the Lord, and served their own gods" (2 Kings 17:33). **Esar-haddon king of Assur**—The king of Assyria. He was the son of Sennacherib. **3. ye have nothing to do with us to build**—The refusal to join with the people of the land was not based upon bigotry or narrowness, but upon principles of righteousness. The nation had been taken into a seventy years' captivity in Babylon to cure them of idolatry. The cure had been effected and Zerubbabel and the other Jewish leaders did not purpose to plunge again into that sin. They took the only course possible to preserve the nation from ruin. **Cyrus.... commanded**—The Jews had full authority to build the house of the Lord. **4. weakened the hands**—The adversaries placed difficulties in the way of the Jews by appealing to the central government, and by attempting to discourage the builders. **5. all the days of Cyrus**—Cyrus continued as king to B. C. 529 and was followed by his son Cambyses. He was too busy in his efforts to overcome Egypt to give attention to the Jews, who were hindered from the work for fifteen years. A decree was issued by Darius in B. C. 520 giving the Jews full authority to build the temple, and the work was completed in B. C. 516, seventy years after the first temple was destroyed.

QUESTIONS.—How many years had passed since the temple was destroyed? What was the first step in religious work when the Jews reached Jerusalem? Who managed the building of the temple? How were their services conducted? Who among the people wept? Why? Who shouted for joy? What adversaries did the Jews have? How did they pretend to be sincere friends? Why was their offer refused? How did they interrupt the work of building? How many years did Cyrus continue as king? How many years was the building of the temple delayed?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. The leading facts in the return of the Jews from Babylon. 2. The time occupied in the journey. 3. The difficulties facing the Jews after arriving at Jerusalem. 4. The need of wise leadership. 5. The religious element in the Jewish nation.

II. THEME.—The duty and joy of divine service.

III. SETTING UP AN ALTAR.—1. The significance of an altar to the Israelite. (1) A recognition of the existence of God. (2) The obligation man is under to God. (3) Man's need of an atonement. (4) The removal of guilt. 2. The altar was set up and sacrifices were offered before the building of the temple. 3. One's religious duties are the most important ones. 4. Abraham's altar (Gen. 12:7; 13:18). Jacob's altar (Gen. 33:20). 5. The Christian's altar. 6. The feast of Tabernacles observed.

IV. LAYING THE FOUNDATION OF THE TEMPLE.—1. Preparations for laying the foundation. (1) Clearing away the ruins. (2) Procuring material. 2. The time of the laying of the foundation. 3. The participants. 4. The ceremonies. 5. The emotions aroused by this event. (1) The joy of some. (2) The sorrow of others. (3) These varied emotions accounted for. 6. The place of emotion in religion.

V. DIFFICULTIES IN THE WAY.—1. The adversaries. (1) Their nationality. (2) Their religion. (3) Their request. (4) Their motive. 2. The attitude of the Jewish leaders toward their proposition. 3. The building of the temple hindered for fifteen years. 4. Satan's efforts to hinder every good work.

VI. HINDRANCES REMOVED.—1. This point carries us on beyond the lesson. 2. The decree issued by Darius to prosecute the task of rebuilding the temple. 3. The aid provided. 4. The temple completed. 5. God makes it possible for men to finish the work which he gives them to do. 6. Difficulties vanish before faith and determined effort.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Foundation principles.

- I. Involved true piety in Judah.
- II. Begat unity in purpose and labor.
- III. Opposed any offer of compromise.

I. Involved true piety in Judah. In the form of their worship the returned exiles adhered scrupulously to the pattern given on the mount, as though it had been but newly presented. The altar of sacrifice was the center of the Jewish religion. With a reverence chastened by long exile they began with the altar itself. Blessed bondage to produce this wholesome fruit of reverence! The last three reigns before the captivity were marked by discord. Reverence as well as union had developed by captivity. Without homes of their own, their cities in ruins, they provided first of all for the temple worship. God and his work came first. They made a wise beginning to begin with worship. In this the people united heartily. They had learned by sad experience their dependence upon God. The altar of sacrifice showed that the place was sacred to Jehovah, and the people were his servants. The fear of the nations around them did not induce them to take up arms of war or to erect fortifications but to prepare an altar on which to offer sacrifices, by which they put themselves under the immediate protection of God. Thus they made the right use of fear.

II. Begat unity in purpose and labor. The full establishment of religious services preceded the building of the temple. Worship was

more important than the house in which it was to be celebrated. Yet the people felt themselves bound not to rest content with the joys and blessings of the altar worship, but to proceed to the more arduous task of rebuilding the temple. Because they kept themselves encouraged in the Lord they were ready to follow out all his plans in their new work. Thus the end and object of the temple were not lost sight of. The variety of service and the unity of design evidenced the guiding hand of God. Their worship was accompanied with gifts, another evidence that captivity was not in vain since it brought a revival of self-sacrifice as well as of reverence, unity and obedience. The scene was commendable indeed, with all at work in unison, obediently and unceasingly, a massed force to be a winning force. There was a reform which took the people back to simpler living, holier thinking, and minute obedience. The foretaste of their joy was expressed when the foundation was laid. In it was an assurance or promise of a complete building. Difficulties were met and overcome and every advance step was taken in faith that the whole structure should one day be complete. Temples tell of One who is invisible, and signify a desire for a nearer and more constant communion with God. Joy and sorrow blend strangely in the events of life. The older men remembered their impiety of earlier days which had caused the nation's shame and made a second temple necessary. Self-reproach and regret mingled with their joy. Yet the joy that followed discipline, repentance and obedience was perhaps the sweetest joy they had ever known. They were of the people who seventy years before had "polluted the house of the Lord." If they contrasted the glory of the first temple with the second they could but suffer blame for the ruin of the first one. But the jubilee marked the dawn of a new day in the history of God's ancient people.

III. Opposed any offer of compromise. The good work of rebuilding the temple was no sooner begun than it met with opposition. The offer of the Samaritans was plausible and sounded kind, but what they said was false. The builders rejected it at once. Their decision was prudent, prompt and decided. They considered their commission to rebuild the temple sacred to themselves. They were not willing to make leagues. Zerubbabel and Jeshua were men of penetration. They could detect Satan's plan of compromise. Though not now captives they were under the control of their captors. The thought of such being the case, quickened them to this work, for by their former neglect of the temple they had lost their freedom. They would not accept pretended friendship and so had to endure embittered resentment, more disagreeable perhaps in its underhandedness but far less dangerous. Every disaster since the days of Josiah had come from departing from the way of the Lord. It was their purpose under the new provisions made for them to resist every temptation to compromise and so keep free.

T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

THEY CARRIED THEIR RELIGION INTO THEIR DAILY LABOR.		THEY WERE JOYOUS, ZEALOUS, WATCHFUL.
IT SWEETENED THEIR TOIL.	LABOR AND PRAISE	SATAN WAS ON HAND TO GIVE THEM TROUBLE.
WILL SWEETEN OURS.		GOD GAVE HELP.

Practical Applications

Unity. "The people gathered themselves together as one man" (Ezra 3:1). "Zerubbabel.... Levites.... all they that were come out" (Ezra 3:8). The prince, the priests and the people all worked together (Ezra 4:2,3) with God, to whom they were equally indebted. And when the adversaries enticed them they said, "We ourselves together will build" (Ezra 4:1-3). The carrying out of this resolution by governor, priests, prophets and people (Ezra 5:1,2) finally resulted in the finishing of the house (Ezra 6:14,15). In union there is strength. When Jesus ascended and left his disciples to build a "spiritual house" (1 Pet. 2:5), they began their work "of one heart" (Acts 4:32), and their power was irresistible. A tiny thread sufficiently multiplied becomes a strong cable. A single drop of water is impotent, but an ocean of drops is resistless. The little white ants by united work construct habitations so strong that elephants mount them and use them as observatories. They are built of particles of wood, cemented so fast as to resist the hurricane. They are a thousand times the height of the insects who build them. The largest pyramid is ninety times the height of the men who built it.

Obedience. They "builded the altar... as it is written in the law" (Ezra 3:2). It had been specially enjoined that only upon that site should sacrifices be offered and only at Jerusalem the feast be kept. Moses made everything pertaining to the tabernacle according to the pattern shown him in the mount (Exod. 25:40; Heb. 8:5). Aaron and his sons did all things which the Lord commanded in reference to the sacrifices (Lev. 8:36; 9:6,7). In the Lord's work human thought and human wisdom have no place. The Lord will direct how his house shall be built and how he shall be worshiped. We have only to obey and be blessed (Deut. 28:2-13).

Praise. "They praised the Lord, because the foundation... was laid" (Ezra 3:11). Pastor C. B. Ford says, "To praise God at the commencement of a work without waiting for its completion is appropriate and not without precedent. When Jehovah laid the foundations of the earth the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy (Job 38:4,7). When the greater work of man's redemption was begun, as the foundation was laid in the incarnation of God's dear Son, heralded by a swift-winged messenger from the skies, 'suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men' (Luke 2:13,14). When in the heart of a sinful man is laid a sincere repentance, the foundation of a new life, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God (Luke 15:10). So those who praise for a work before it is completed are followers of God and of angels."

Opposition. "The adversaries of Judah" (Ezra 4:1). Years after, the greatest of spiritual builders wrote, "A great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries" (1 Cor. 16:9). If we say to the world, "Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God" (Ezra 4:3), they will seek to frustrate our purpose. If we will not invite them to pay for suppers to repair the church or furnish the parsonage they will seek to hinder our work. But we are not to marvel if the world "hate us" (1 John 3:13). Jesus said, "It hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—We may all join in the service of the Lord.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

An altar erected

The temple commenced

Rejoicing and weeping

Enemies hindering

An altar erected. Tell the story of the returned exiles preparing houses for their families after their arrival in Judah. It was only a short time after their return that the Jews felt that they must commence the public worship of Jehovah. Have the children tell you their ideas of what it is to worship God, then describe the worship that the Jews rendered at the time referred to in the lesson. The first thing needed in order that they might worship the Lord publicly was an altar. The former altar had stood in the court of the temple, but since both the temple and the altar were in ruins, it was decided to construct the altar where the old one had stood without waiting for the temple to be built. Explain to the class that the sacrifices pointed to the suffering of Christ on the cross for the sins of the world.

The foundation of the temple laid. Ask the children to tell you the different parts of a large building and the way builders go to work to construct it. Describe the ruins of the temple, showing a picture of the ruins of an old building. In order to erect a great building like the temple, the foundation must be laid; but the ruins must first be cleared away. Impress the thought that the house of God and his service ought to be dear to every one. Describe the scene of laying the foundation, as the builders, the priests and the Levites did their part, and the people stood around looking on with intense interest.

Rejoicing and weeping. Note the fact that the people had been away from Jerusalem for a long time, and had been deprived of the privileges of the temple and the altar. Show why some of the great company were rejoicing and the others were weeping. Compare the great wealth of Solomon and the prosperity of the nation at that time with the condition of the Jews who came back from Babylon. The returned captives were doing all in their power toward rebuilding the temple, and there was great rejoicing, even though some wept because of the weakened condition of the Jewish nation. At a large meeting some years ago an effort was made to raise money to found a Christian school. After the minister had explained the object of the undertaking, he called for subscriptions. A lad, who was in the congregation, was the first to respond, for his heart had been touched. His offering was only a dime, but it meant much to him. He afterward attended the school, was converted, and became a useful minister of the gospel. We should have fervent love for God's cause.

Enemies hindering. Tell the story of the efforts of the people who were not true worshippers of Israel's God to join with the Jews in building the temple and the trouble they made for many years. The building was, however, later completed.

LESSON V

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Oct. 23.—Psalm of deliverance.—Psa. 85: 1-13. Tu.—Songs of captivity.—Psa. 137: 1-9. Wed.—Joy of the returned.—Psa. 126: 1-6. Th.—Rejoicing in God's house.—Psa. 122: 1-9. Fr.—Escaped from the fowler.—Psa. 124: 1-8. Sat.—Comfort ye my people.—Isa. 40: 1-31. Su.—Sing, O daughter of Zion.—Zeph. 3: 1-20.

A PSALM OF DELIVERANCE.—Psa. 85: 1-13.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 10, 11)

SUPT.—1 Lord, thou hast been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Ja'cob.

School.—2 Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin. Se'lah.

3 Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger.

4 Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease.

5 Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?

6 Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?

7 Shew us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation.

8 I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly.

9 Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land.

10 Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

11 Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.

12 Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase.

13 Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps.

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1 Jehovah, thou hast been favorable unto thy land;

Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.

2 Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people;

Thou hast covered all their sin. Selah.

3 Thou hast taken away all thy wrath; Thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger.

4 Turn us, O God of our salvation, And cause thine indignation toward us to cease.

5 Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?

6 Wilt thou not quicken us again, That thy people may rejoice in thee?

7 Show us thy lovingkindness, O Jehovah, And grant us thy salvation.

8 I will hear what God Jehovah will speak: For he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints:

But let them not turn again to folly.

9 Surely his salvation is nigh then: that fear him.

That glory may dwell in our land.

10 Mercy and truth are met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

11 Truth springeth out of the earth; And righteousness hath looked down from heaven.

12 Yea, Jehovah will give that which is good; And our land shall yield its increase.

13 Righteousness shall go before him, And shall make his footsteps a way to walk in.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. Psa. 126: 3.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—God is faithful in fulfilling his word.

TOPIC.—True intercession.

OUTLINE.—I. Gratitude for deliverance. II. A prayer for greater blessings. III. Assurance of prosperity.

TIME.—Probably during the period of the return from captivity.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

READ.—Psalms 121, 122, 126.

INTRODUCTION.—This psalm is generally regarded as belonging to the time following the seventy years of Jewish captivity, its exact date being unknown. It is supposed to have been written by a returned exile, whose name has not been preserved to us. The sentiments expressed are appropriate to this period, as most writers concede, yet Spurgeon sees no reason why the psalm may not be attributed to David. He considers the thoughts here recorded as applicable spiritually to all ages, and the few references of a material character as applicable to conditions in David's time when Israel was oppressed by the Philistines. Both ancient and modern writers are, however, almost unanimous in the opinion that this is a post-exilic psalm. While the blessings sought for and promised, as presented in the language of the psalm, have to do directly with Israel after the return from captivity, it is certain that there are references to the Messianic period. Blessings are promised which could only have their fulfilment during the Christian age.

COMMENTARY.—I. GRATITUDE FOR DELIV-

ERANCE (vs. 1-3). 1. Lord—Jehovah, the all-sufficient, the self-existing One, thou hast been favourable—Here is a hearty recognition of God's power, authority and interest in the affairs of men, and an acknowledgment of his goodness in all his dealings with Israel. thy land—It was the land which God had provided as a dwelling-place for his people, from which they had been driven because of their sins, and to which they were being restored through the divine favor. "He chose it for his people, conveyed it to them by covenant, conquered it by his power, and dwelt in it by mercy."—Spurgeon. "The land is mine" (Lev. 25: 23).

thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob—The punishment foretold by the prophets had been inflicted, and the sin of idolatry, for which Israel was chastised, had been forsaken. The thing which to human reason seemed impossible had been accomplished. The passage agrees well with the description of the restoration given in Ezra 1: 2-4, and doubtless reference is made to the return of the exiles under the leadership of Zerubbabel. The nation of Israel is designated by the name Jacob.

2. forgiven the iniquity—The Hebrew words describe sin (1) as depravity or moral distortion, (2) as a wandering from the way or missing the mark; and forgiveness (1) as the removal of a burden, (2) as a covering of the offense, which would otherwise meet the eye of the judge and call for punishment.—Cam. Bible. The Jews in captivity had humbled themselves before the Lord and the burden of their

guilt had been removed. **covered all their sin**—Christ “is the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 2: 2). The atonement of Christ covers the sins of all who in the evangelical sense believe. “The Lord has put it so completely away that even his omniscient eye sees it no more.”—*Spurgeon*. **selah**—No satisfactory explanation has ever been given of the meaning of this word. Some of the explanations that have been suggested are: “A sign to elevate the voice,” “A change of note,” “A musical note,” “Up, my soul!” “An appeal, or summons, to Jehovah.” It seems to have been used to give some direction as to the way the portion of the psalm should be sung. **3. all thy wrath**—The divine wrath, or indignation, had been let loose upon the nation because of sin, but now it was withdrawn, and the people were rejoicing in the divine favor. **fierceness of thine anger**—The sin of Israel was the occasion of God’s displeasure, and now that the sin was removed the divine displeasure ceased. The severity of the punishment inflicted was the measure of the fierceness of God’s anger. Punishment less severe would not have been sufficient to meet the demand. “Lord, thou hast been favourable unto thy land,” is explained and enlarged by the subsequent expressions in verses 1-3, each indicating a particular point in which favor had been shown. Underneath all these expressions is a current of thanksgiving and rejoicing.

II. A PRAYER FOR GREATER BLESSINGS (vs. 4-7).

4. turn us—Although much had already been done in the nation’s restoration, much still remained to be done before they could enjoy full national prosperity. The captivity had been turned, but as yet only a small proportion of the Jews had returned from Babylon to Jerusalem. The expression means “convert,” and was applicable to Israel as a nation and as individuals. **O God of our salvation**—This was a fitting acknowledgment for them to make, that God was their sole hope and help. The prayer included in this verse is expressive of penitence, need, and faith in God’s mercy and power. **5. wilt thou be angry...for ever**—We have already suffered much, and long: our fathers have suffered, and we have succeeded to their distresses. Draw not out thy anger against us from generation to generation.—*Churke*. The desolation visited upon Jerusalem and the land of Judah when the nation was taken into captivity was great, and conditions there grew worse during the seventy years of exile; consequently the process of restoration was slow and arduous. It was more than twenty years after the decree of Cyrus authorizing the return that the temple was restored, and nearly one hundred before the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt. Sin works ruin and its consequences are likely to be long-lived. **6. revive us again**—Wilt not thou return and quicken us, restoring our national life according to the promises of the prophets?—*Kirkpatrick*. Faith increased as the petitioner proceeded with the request. The need was great, but application was being made to the right source, and confidence was growing strong. The same prayer was offered by Habakkuk (3: 2) when he foresaw this sad condition of Israel. **that thy people may rejoice in thee**—A manifestation of the divine presence and favor is a ground for rejoicing. The prayer indicates that the rejoicing was not to be in the restored temple, city, nation or harvests, but in the Lord. Multitudes recognize in worldly prosperity the only ground for rejoicing, while the spiritually-minded follower of Jesus finds his real joy in the Lord. “If God is the fountain of all our mercies, he must be the center of all our joys.”—*Henry*. **7. shew us thy mercy**—

There had already been a large manifestation of God’s mercy to Israel, yet there was need for a constant exercise of that mercy. When a sinner realizes the enormity of his offenses against God and what his rebellion truly deserves, his most natural appeal is for mercy, and such a cry is not disregarded.

III. ASSURANCE OF PROSPERITY (vs. 8-13). 8. hear what God the Lord will speak—There was a well-grounded expectation that the Lord would answer. Too often people offer up prayers, and then go their way without listening to hear what “the Lord will speak.” **he will speak peace**—God’s anger was turned away from Israel because of their changed attitude toward him, and in response to their prayer of faith he would speak peace to them. **his saints**—Those who had set themselves apart for God’s service. **let them not turn again to folly**—In the past the Jewish nation had been unstable. They had repeatedly turned to the Lord and had as often forsaken him. “Those who would enjoy conscious communion with God must avoid all that would grieve the Holy Spirit; not only grosser sins, but even follies.”—*Spurgeon*. It is the height of folly to turn to sin after one has known the Lord. **9. that glory may dwell in our land**—In the time of Solomon there was great prosperity in the nation, and the glory of the Lord was manifested in the temple at Jerusalem. “The ‘glory’ here is especially used in reference to the ark of the covenant, as formerly containing the holiest symbols of their religion, and the sign and pledge of Jehovah’s presence and favor.”—*Whedon*.

10. mercy and truth are met together—God’s words concerning Israel had been proved to be true, and his mercy had been shown in the nation’s restoration from captivity. Israel had repented, and mercy had been granted in keeping with God’s word of truth. Mercy and truth are inseparable. **righteousness and peace have kissed each other**—There can be no peace in the highest sense but upon the basis of righteousness. Justice had been meted out to Israel and, in consequence of that, peace was bestowed. The elements of God’s kingdom of grace are “righteousness, and peace, and joy” (Rom. 14: 17). **11. truth shall spring out of the earth**—There had been a period of spiritual dearth, but the truth of God would prevail in the hearts of men as a consequence of their turning to the Lord. Doubtless reference is also made to the time when Christ should appear on earth to establish his kingdom through his ministry and death. **righteousness...from heaven**—A figure showing the prevalence of righteousness in the time to come when Israel should become prosperous, possibly looking forward also to Messianic times. **12. our land shall yield her increase**—Because of Israel’s sin the land had become barren, but with a return to righteousness its fertility would be restored, as an indication of God’s favor. **13. righteousness shall go before him**—As a herald to prepare the way. **in the way of his steps**—The blessings promised are enjoyed only by those who follow in the ways of God.

QUESTIONS.—Upon what occasion is this psalm supposed to have been written? How long was Israel in captivity? In what sense is the name Jacob here used? What reasons had Israel for rejoicing? What is meant by the Lord’s anger? How had God shown his mercy to Israel? What warning is given in verse 8, and why was such a warning needed? Upon what conditions can one enjoy peace of soul? What promises were given to the nation? Why did the land of Israel become barren? On what conditions would its fruitfulness be restored?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. The Psalms form the largest and most remarkable collection of Hebrew poetry in existence. 2. They were composed largely by David, but the works of several other authors appear, one psalm bearing the name of Moses. 3. They were written through a long period of time, from B. C. 1500 to B. C. 450. 4. They were formerly divided into five books, each of which ends with a doxology. (1) Psalms 1-41, written mostly by David. (2) Psalms 42-72, written mainly by David and the sons of Korah. (3) Psalms 73-89, written by Asaph. (4) Psalms 90-106, the remainder of those written before the captivity. (5) Psalms 107-150, mostly anonymous, and pertaining to the captivity and the return. 5. Psalm 85 is generally believed to belong to the post-exilic period.

II. THEME.—Deliverance for God's people.

III. GRATITUDE.—1. The recognition of God's hand in Israel's behalf. 2. The people lost sight of their own efforts and acknowledged their restoration was the Lord's work. 3. Those for whom God does great things are glad to attribute the praise to him. 4. Reasons for gratitude. (1) For restoration from captivity. (2) For forgiveness of sins. (3) For the divine approbation.

IV. PETITION.—1. It is no proof that one needs nothing from God because much has already been done for him. 2. The small proportion of the captives who had already returned. 3. The condition of the land and nation upon the return of the company under Zerubbabel. 4. The five principal elements in the petition. 5. The confidence that there would be an answer to the petition.

V. EXPECTATION.—1. There was an expectation of help. (1) Because there was real need. (2) There was a cry for help. (3) There was confidence in God's wisdom, mercy and power. 2. The blessings expected. (1) Present salvation. (2) The presence of the divine glory. (3) The reign of truth and righteousness. (4) The enjoyment of mercy and peace. (5) Temporal prosperity. 3. The relation existing between righteousness and peace as affecting humanity. There can be no true peace except upon the basis of righteousness.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—True intercession.

I. Based upon God's past mercies.

II. Based upon man's present need.

III. Based upon God's ideal for man.

I. Based upon God's past mercies. "Thou hast been favourable." The favor of God is the fountain of happiness to nations as well as to individuals. There is more in God to give cheer than in circumstances to cause distress. Though Cyrus had proclaimed deliverance to the Jews they recognized God's hand in it, and in their restoration were assured of divine forgiveness for all past sins. In their captivity God had marked all their repentings and knew when they were healed of their tendency to idolatry. Then was he merciful and extended his power to bring them out of the land of captivity to their own land where they could again enter upon free and open devotion to God. The thought of all their sins and the boundless love and mercy of God filled the mind of the psalmist as he approached the Lord to ask for his special help in their new life in Canaan. He desired that they might realize the full blessings of restoration. The public interests lay upon the psalmist's heart, and his prayer was

for the great congregation. His sense of their present afflictions did not obscure the remembrance of former mercies.

II. Based upon man's present need. Though a representative number of the Jews were settled in their own land, they were surrounded by enemies and many evidences of their weakness were manifest. They were in a state of deep distress, such as is described in Ezra and Nehemiah. For them the psalmist sought forgiveness and consolation and prayed for a revival. His prayer expressed his dependence upon God, his confidence in God and his importunity with God. He looked to him alone as the source of reviving power and grace, since he only can speak true peace to the soul.

III. Based upon God's ideal for man. When the psalmist reached the height of his pleading, his soul grew quiet in the presence of his Maker and he felt constrained to silence before him. A patient, attentive, obedient disposition possessed him and an expectant, waiting frame of mind enabled him to grasp the ideal, the plan of God for his needy people. The very first approach to a true revival was conditioned on a covenant not to "turn again to folly." As God was the fountain of all their mercies, he must also be the center of all their joys. God had thoughts of peace in relation to his people and fulfilled them in conformity with his truth, but always in harmony with his righteousness. When mercy, truth and righteousness have a sovereign influence on men's hearts and lives all good may be expected. Mercy and faithfulness blend together in all God's dealings with his people, and righteousness and peace are inseparable in their spiritual experiences. The divine purpose is to reverse the moral state of things so long prevalent among mankind. The psalmist foresaw a spiritual revival, a new realization of God, when doubt and weakness should give place to confidence and strength, when truth should cover the earth as righteousness clothes the heavens, when earth and heaven so long alienated in sympathy and character should be one, when man should bear the image of God and earth should be the reflection of heaven. A spiritual revival begins as a personal matter and the same standard must reach from individuals to nations. What a delight to discover, instead of a world of rebels against God, a world of loyal subjects! The earth quickened by the seeds of truth and watered by the rains of righteousness shall yield her increase. Truth shall spring up and flourish and so clothe this lower world as to make it the counterpart of that upper one. As the psalmist waited before the Lord he grasped the thought of fellowship and companionship with God, a place of safety for all who walk in the "way of his steps." There was revealed to him a higher standard for his people than any previous experience had reached. His vision embraced the dispensation of the gospel. The possibilities of divine life grew bright before his prayerful soul.

T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

ANCIENT PROPHECY FULFILLED.	MERCY AND TRUTH ARE MET TOGETHER.	THERE WAS A DESIRE TO DRAW NEAR TO GOD.
THERE WAS CAUSE FOR REJOICING.		THEY HAD A NEW HOPE FOR THE FUTURE.
THEIR CAPTIVITY WAS ENDED AND THEIR SINS FORGIVEN.		THE CHRIST-LIFE IS FORETOLD.

Practical Applications

Freedom. "Brought back the captivity" (v. 1). "Turned again the captivity of Zion" (Psa. 126: 1). God brought the captives from Babylon, type of "bondage" and oppression (Isa. 14: 3), to Jerusalem, type of freedom (Gal. 4: 26). The saved are released from the slavery of sin and Satan (Rom. 6: 17, 18, 22; John 8: 32, 36). A slave to the opium habit for thirteen long, miserable years, realized that she was fast bound with the chains of the devil. Often she resolved to free herself, but as often was overcome. In this hopeless condition she went one night with her sister to a mission. On their way home she said, "I am going home to spend another night fighting the powers of darkness, and I know not how it will end." Her sister replied, "No, you must go with me." She consented, and although under the terrible power of the drug used that day, she promised God that another drop of opium should never pass her lips. The next morning, remembering her promise, she fell upon her knees and prayed, "O God, thou must do the work; I am helpless; I can not, I can not help myself" and before she was through asking the work was done and she knew it. From that hour she was a free woman in Christ Jesus.

Forgiveness. "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity" (v. 2). Forgiveness suggests that salvation is the gift of God (Rom. 5: 18; 6: 23). God gave his Son "for our sins." A visitor, talking with an old man anxious to be saved, found difficulty in making him understand that pardon is the free gift of God through the precious blood of Christ. At last he said, "Suppose I were to buy something for you, and pay for it, and tell you to go and get it, need you take any money?" "No," said the old man, "it would be paid for." "Need you make any promise to pay at some future time?" "No, I should have it for nothing." "So with forgiveness; Jesus paid the full price for it. He had the groans, the sighs, the tears, the wrath, the pain, the punishment; all that sin deserved. He bore it all; he paid the whole; bought forgiveness with his precious blood, and now gives it to all who bring their sins to him." "I see it now," said the old man, his eyes full of tears. "It is pardon for nothing! pardon for nothing! Christ has bought it, and he will give it to me." Everything is purchased "for" us in Christ. Our part is to believe it and receive him. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1: 12).

Favor. "Thou hast taken away all thy wrath" (v. 3). "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation" (1 Thess. 5: 9). A young girl, brought up among the vices of a great city, was fully saved. When her sins were forgiven her face bore all the marks of dissipation and vice. She was taken out of her evil surroundings and placed among loving Christian friends. Victory after victory followed for her until all who came in contact with her were struck with her purity. One day a lady was heard to remark, "I have heard many sermons on 'The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin,' but this girl is the best sermon I ever heard. I never go near her that I do not feel like saying, 'My pure little sister.'" God gave her health and beauty, purity and peace, in place of "wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores" (Isa. 1: 6). Instead of vicious companions and a life in the haunts of wickedness, he gave her Christian friends and a beautiful home, also peace in her soul, with a joy that was a strength to her in her activities.

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—The Lord hears the prayers of those who call upon him in faith.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

PRAISE FOR	Restoration Forgiveness
PRAYER FOR	A revival Divine mercy
TRUST FOR	Peace prosperity

The Psalms. This is the only lesson that we have this year taken from the Psalms. Give a little time to a description of this book, telling the number of the Psalms, by whom many of them were written, and that many of them were composed to be sung. They made up the Hebrew hymn-book. Are the children able to repeat any psalm? Some of them will be able to recite the twenty-third. Go through it with them a few times.

Praise. Although you have repeatedly gone over the story of Judah's sinfulness and captivity, it will be in place to do so again, that you may explain the restoration from captivity, and the reasons that the Jews had for being grateful to God. The lesson furnishes an opportunity to show how greatly God is displeased with sin, and how the sinner may be forgiven and restored to the divine favor. Tell the story of a child who has been wisely punished for disobedience by a loving parent. The child's wrong was great, the punishment was deserved and administered in mercy, and the subdued child, though humbled, was glad to have again the parent's favor and pardon. A boy had disobeyed his mother and deserved punishment, but refused to be punished. He ran away from home and hired out to work for a man some miles away. He had a sorry time of it, and in a few days made up his mind that the best thing for him to do was to return home, take the punishment and receive his mother's pardon. He did it and was glad to be punished and to have a home again.

Prayer. Discuss with the class the nature and need of prayer. Explain the conditions existing in Jerusalem that made a revival desirable and necessary. Tell briefly the story of some great revival, as that in Martin Luther's time, in John Wesley's time, in Charles G. Finney's time, or the one in Wales a few years ago. A man was leaving a revival meeting, resisting the Spirit and the entreaties of those who were interested in seeing him converted. At the doorway he looked into the face of his daughter and saw her in tears because of his refusal. He returned and sought the Lord. He said to a friend afterward, "I could not resist the tear in my daughter's eye."

Trust. The writer of this psalm had firm confidence in God. Select all the expressions in verses 9-13 which show that he trusted the Lord. Note the many different things which he expected would be done. The story is told of an Indian boy in attendance at a Christian school. His disposition was bad and so was his conduct. The teachers had much trouble with him and were on the point of sending him away, but upon his promise to do better he was allowed to remain. During a revival he became converted and was thoroughly changed. At vacation time he went to his own people, who saw the great change that had taken place, and were convinced of the power of God's grace.

LESSON VI

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Oct. 30.—Esther chosen queen.—Esth. 1:1-2:23. Tu.—Haman's plot.—Esth. 3:1-15. Wed.—Esther's noble resolve.—Esth. 4:1-17. Th.—The banquet.—Esth. 5:1-6:14. Fr.—Haman hanged on his own gallows.—Esth. 7:1-10. Sat.—Saving of the Jews.—Esth. 8:1-17. Su.—Feast of Purim.—Esth. 9:1-10:3.

ESTHER PLEADING FOR HER PEOPLE.—Esth. 4:1-5:3. Print 4:10-5:3.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 4:13, 14)

SUPT.—10 Again Es'ther spake unto Ha'tach, and gave him commandment unto Mor-de-ca'i;

School.—11 All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days.

12 And they told to Mor-de-ca'i Es'ther's words.

13 Then Mor-de-ca'i commanded to answer Es'ther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews.

14 For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

15 Then Es'ther bade them return Mor-de-ca'i this answer,

16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shu'shan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.

17 So Mor-de-ca'i went his way, and did according to all that Es'ther had commanded him.

1 Now it came to pass on the third day, that Es'ther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house over against the gate of the house.

2 And it was so, when the king saw Es'ther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Es'ther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Es'ther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre.

3 Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Es'ther? and what is thy request? It shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.

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10 Then Esther spake unto Hathach, and gave him a message unto Mordecai, saying: 11 All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law for him, that he be put to death, except those to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days. 12 And they told to Mordecai Esther's words.

13 Then Mordecai bade them return answer unto Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. 14 For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then will relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house will perish: and who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this? 15 Then Esther bade them return answer unto Mordecai, 16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast in like manner; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish. 17 So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

1 Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the entrance of the house. 2 And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favor in his sight; and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre. 3 Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? It shall be given thee even to the half of the kingdom.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? **School.**—The Lord preserveth all them that love him. Psa. 145:20.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—God's people have recourse to prayer in times of danger.

TOPIC.—Life crises.

OUTLINE.—I. Haman's wicked plot. II. Esther's opportunity. III. Esther's courage. IV. Esther's success.

TIME.—B. C. 473.

PLACE.—Shushan (Susa), the winter capital of the Persian empire, situated about two hundred miles southeast of Babylon.

READ.—Esth. 1-10.

INTRODUCTION.—The book of Esther presents to us a view of Oriental life in the Persian court, and also gives us a glimpse of the condition of the Jews during their captivity in Babylon. The book must be studied in its entirety in order to obtain an understanding of the events contained in the lesson. The history recorded belongs to the period between the dedication of the temple at Jerusalem, and the journey of Ezra from Babylon to Jerusalem. The Ahasuerus of the book of Esther has been almost positively identified with the Persian king, Xerxes, who, with an army of a million or more soldiers and a large naval force, set out to conquer Greece and was ingloriously defeated, and forced

to return home with a mere handful of his once magnificent army. Previously to the campaign just mentioned the king had provided a great series of banquets for the chief men of his empire, the festivities extending over a period of a half-year. At the close of this extended revelry the king inflamed with drink commanded his queen, Vashti, to appear in the banqueting-hall that her beauty might be seen by the multitude of guests. The queen courageously refused to present herself before the intoxicated banqueters, and for her disobedience was removed from being queen. After careful search throughout the empire Esther was chosen to fill Vashti's place. She was a Jewish maiden of the tribe of Benjamin, the daughter of Abihail, and a cousin of Mordecai. She was an orphan and had been brought up by Mordecai. The name of God does not occur in the book of Esther, yet there is abundant evidence of the Jews' devotion to him and of faith in his mercy and power. His hand is plainly recognized in the deliverance brought to his people.

COMMENTARY.—I. **HAMAN'S WICKED PLOT** (vs. 1-9). A few years after Esther had been made queen an event took place which deeply affected the interests of the Jews in the Persian empire, Ahasuerus had promoted Haman to a high position in the empire, and all the servants and subordinate officers of the royal court were expected to bow

down before him. Since Mordecai was a Jew, he considered the act of bowing down before another an act of worship, and this would be a violation of Jewish law, therefore he refused to do it. Mordecai's course angered Haman so greatly that the latter plotted the destruction not only of Mordecai, but of all the Jews in the empire. The king was influenced to sanction a decree for the destruction of the Jews, and thus Haman's injured pride was about to be satisfied. Haman designed to plunder the Jews and enrich himself with their property, offering the king for the privilege ten thousand talents of silver, or about twenty million dollars. The destruction of the Jews was set for the thirteenth day of Adar, about March first, B. C. 473. Upon the publication of the decree Mordecai and his fellow Jews were deeply pained and gave themselves over to weeping and fasting. Mordecai put on sackcloth in token of his grief and appeared before the royal palace that he might attract the attention of Esther, and thus succeeded in making known to her the plot of Haman.

II. ESTHER'S OPPORTUNITY (vs. 10-14). **10. Hatach**—An officer appointed to wait upon Esther, who had brought to her a message from Mordecai. **commandment**—"Message."—*R. V.* **11. all... do know**—It was a universal rule, which was known by all. The object of this law was to maintain both the dignity and safety of the king. **golden sceptre**—Persian monarchs are always represented as holding a long, tapering staff in the right hand. **have not been called**—She therefore had just cause to fear that the king's affections were alienated from her "and that neither her person nor her petition would be acceptable to him." Oriental monarchs were fickle and despotic. In attempting to save her people the queen must risk everything. The ardor of the king had, for the time, cooled toward Esther, and she feared she had lost her influence with him. If so, how could she hope to influence him for the salvation of the despised Jews? We must not be surprised that Esther shrank from obeying the summons of Mordecai. She proved her heroism by deciding to go before the king, although knowing the danger to which she was exposed.

13. think not... that thou shalt escape—The decree was so sweeping in its provisions that no Jew in the empire was exempt. Even Esther, the queen, had no assurance of safety. Although her nationality may have been kept a secret thus far, the fact that she belonged to the Jewish race would be revealed before the great slaughter. **14. enlargement and deliverance... from another place**—As Mordecai had already shown himself a faithful servant of the king, and true to his own race, so also he exhibited unshaken confidence in God. He believed that God would open a door of escape for his people. **thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed**—Her inactivity would involve not only herself but her family in ruin. Thus she has nothing to hope from the alternative. It insures her death; the other course but risks it. —*Cam. Bible.* **thou art come... for such a time as this**—Mordecai had a seer's vision. It was a peculiar providence that had brought Esther to her place as queen; it was a peculiar providence that had brought the Jews to the verge of destruction; and it was evident that a great opportunity and a great duty were before her. To Mordecai it seemed that Esther was in a position to save both herself and her whole nation. It remained for her to realize the importance of the occasion and to grasp the opportunity. There were several reasons why she should act: 1. Her own life was at stake, as

well as the lives of all her people. 2. She had a high position and influence with the king. 3. She had a duty to perform for the preservation of God's chosen people. 4. She had nothing to gain and everything to lose by remaining inactive.

III. ESTHER'S COURAGE (vs. 15-17). **16. fast**—The need was great, and the most effective means of help must be used. Fasting with the Jews on that occasion included an acknowledgment of helplessness, a drawing near to God, and faith in his ability to deliver them. While nothing is said directly about praying, it is easily inferred that the Jews prayed, for fasting and prayer go together. **if I perish, I perish**—Her only hope was in gaining access to the king and securing his favor. She knew the despotic character of King Ahasuerus, and realized that he had little regard for human life. Her decision has afforded an example for the ages. **17. Mordecai went his way**—Within the palace and without there was earnest supplication for three days. The Jews were doing their part and were expecting relief.

IV. ESTHER'S SUCCESS (vs. 1-3). **1. the king sat**—The position of the king was such that he could see all who entered the court. **2. saw Esther**—As the king sat upon the throne, the two were face to face, though there was quite a distance between them. It was a critical moment, but Esther did not forget that "the heart of the king was in the hand of the Lord." **touched... sceptre**—This was, no doubt, the usual way of accepting the king's favor. "As the scepter was the ensign of the highest and most absolute authority in the king, so the queen's touching it, or, as some say, kissing it, was a token of her subjection and thankfulness for his favor."

3. it shall be even given thee—Earnestness, courage and united prayer had availed. Esther's mission was being fulfilled and the deliverance sought for did not seem far away. It was a testing-time in Esther's life when she was being prepared to become a queen, but the really crucial point in her career was when she decided to approach the king at the risk of her life to make intercession for her people. The remaining chapters of the book tell impressively the story of Haman's downfall and the preservation of the Jews from the destruction plotted by their enemy. The discovery made by Ahasuerus, that Mordecai had been instrumental in saving him from a plot laid to take his life, brought unexpected honor to Mordecai and the deepest humiliation to Haman. While Haman was expecting soon to put Mordecai to death, he was made the unwilling instrument in doing highest honors to Mordecai. It became his duty to lead the horse which carried Mordecai through the streets of Shushan; and at the same time Haman was commanded to shout, "Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour" (Esth. 6:11). The climax of Haman's deserved punishment came, when, at the command of the king, he was hanged upon the gallows which he had erected for the express purpose of executing Mordecai. Vengeance was fully meted out, however, upon the nation, when, through an edict of the king, the Jews were permitted to defend themselves and to slay their enemies.

QUESTIONS.—When was the time of this lesson? Who was Ahasuerus? Where was Shushan? What peculiarity has the book of Esther? Who was Esther? Mordecai? Haman? When did Esther become queen? Why did Haman hate Mordecai? What plot did Haman plan? What word did Mordecai send to Esther? What was the queen's reply? What was the golden scepter? What was Mordecai's next message to Esther? What did Esther do?

A Teaching Plan

I. **INTRODUCTORY.**—1. The time and place of the events of this lesson. 2. The connection with the preceding lesson. 3. A brief sketch of Ahasuerus. 4. A peculiarity of the book of Esther. 5. The principal persons mentioned. 6. The great lessons taught by the story of Esther. 7. The entire story should be considered.

II. **THEME.**—Persistent and courageous supplication.

III. **THE JEWS IN DANGER.**—1. Mordecai. (1) His nationality. (2) His disposition. (3) His station in life. 2. Haman. (1) His position. (2) His arrogance. 3. The relations between Mordecai and Haman. 4. Compare Haman's selfishness and pride (5: 11-14) with Mordecai's faithfulness (2: 21-23). 5. Haman's wounded pride. 6. The steps taken by Haman to secure revenge. 7. An indication of Haman's greed. 8. The king's lack of forethought. 9. The cruel decree issued.

IV. **A ROYAL SUPPLIANT.**—1. Esther's nationality and parentage. 2. Her relation to Mordecai. He was her cousin and foster-father. 3. The story of her being made queen of Persia. 4. The message of Mordecai to Esther. 5. Esther's reply. 6. The second message of Mordecai. 7. Esther's courageous decision. 8. The means used to secure a favorable response from the king. 9. Other instances of the effectiveness of prayer. 10. Making the most of one's opportunity. 11. Moral crises in human life.

V. **A SUCCESSFUL PLEA.**—1. Much courage and faith required on Esther's part, but she was favorably received. 2. The king's large offer. 3. Esther's tactful course in making known Haman's wicked plot. 4. The promotion of Mordecai. 5. The fate of Haman. 6. The counter decree issued for the preservation of the Jews. 7. The meaning of the feast of Purim.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Life crises.

I. Brought on by cruel hatred

II. Met by heroic self-sacrifice.

I. **Brought on by cruel hatred.** The ancient antipathy of an Amalekite to the Israel of God is clearly portrayed in the life and conduct of Haman. He was one of that nation with whom God had sworn that he would have perpetual war. Proud and malicious, he did not limit expense to gratify revenge. Haman charged no crime upon the Jews, only die they must and without mercy. The king took no time to examine documents, but confidently trusted the arrangement to Haman without himself knowing the import of the edict. Upon Mordecai the first effect of the proclamation was bitter anguish, but his grief did not upset his judgment or cause him to lose faith. Yet grief so firmly rooted and so well founded could not be removed without the removal of its cause. Mordecai had a strong belief that God would interfere in this case. Yet he believed it necessary to act with a determined and resolute will and unflinching energy in securing the deliverance of his people. Opportunity was the test of character, not only for Mordecai but for Esther, the only one whom he could direct in his attempt to overthrow Haman's plot. It was the tidal time of Esther's life, the greatest opportunity of her existence, and the question was whether she would rise to the occasion and make it subservient to her greatness or whether it would sweep her away with it, as weak and irresolute and unequal to

the emergency. Power and opportunity measured her obligation. Though loving Esther as a daughter, Mordecai did not scruple about risking her life. He did not urge his love for her nor her obligation to him as reasons why she should grant his wish. He would have her act under higher motives than those and in obedience to a higher will than his. Esther's womanly caution brought out his courage and his faith. Her peculiar circumstances required peculiar service. In substance he may have reasoned thus: Harken! Will you separate your interests from those of your people and your God? If you could would you thereby secure them? Remember for your humiliation that God can do without you. How can you bear the disgrace of having suffered your golden opportunity to be despised? Consider! Why are you thus blessed in temporal things?

II. **Met by heroic self-sacrifice.** Esther's special mission was to avert the destruction which threatened her people. In the heroism of a great surrender she declared, "So will I go." The king's favorite was Esther's enemy, a wicked, crafty, designing foe. To preserve her people Esther must hazard her life. Performance of duty must follow resolve. Her season for action was brief and precious and if neglected could not be recalled. Her heart was moved to sincere dependence upon God. She was charged to use her influence on the side of right and justice and against oppression and tyranny. The yearning of Esther's soul through her fast made its appeal to Jehovah. The same power which supported her, at the same time moved the king's heart to listen and accept her. Mordecai and the Jewish people engaged in prayer while Esther exposed herself to death in their behalf. When the time came for Esther to approach the king she found her way was clear. This splendid devotion to the welfare of her people would never have been an opportunity to be exercised had she not meekly learned and diligently practised the lessons of her girlhood which Mordecai taught her in his pious home. God moved Esther's heart to great wisdom and prudence in her management of her undertaking. Her true piety in the exercise of its faith and hope and love toward God united all her wisest calculations and efforts with the goodness and power of God. Her bold resolution and solemn preparation were rewarded in a successful issue and the crisis was met. In reverence, in submission and for safety Esther touched the golden scepter, and then all the power of the empire was between her and harm. Her faithful discharge of duty brought rich results. Mordecai's firm faith in an overruling providence, God's recognition of human instrumentality in his government and Esther's practise of self-sacrifice form the important principles of this remarkable history. Each individual life has its special plan which God designs to work out. Only as the individual meets and accepts that plan can it be said that the life is most successful. T. B. A.

Blackboard Exercise

THE WICKEDNESS OF HAMAN UNEARTHED.	DELIVERANCE CAME FROM GOD.
SWIFT JUSTICE METED OUT.	FASTING AND PRAYER PREPARED THE WAY.
HAMAN FELL INTO HIS OWN TRAP.	ESTHER'S NOBLE RESOLVE WAS CARRIED OUT.
BEWARE OF ENVY.	

Practical Applications

"Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape" (v. 13). Mordecai felt that Esther might be tempted to think she would be safe in the palace though all the people perished because she "had not yet shewed her kindred nor her people" (2:20), so he fortified her against yielding to such a selfish suggestion of the devil. Does the same temptation come to us? Are we tempted to think we are safe though the city be steeped in sin and shame? Tempted to be satisfied to live in light though the heathen perish in darkness? Tempted to rejoice and enjoy our plenty though thousands around us suffer? God help us and give us the unselfish love which says, "His people are my people, his interests are my interests, his desires are my desires, his glory is my glory."

"If thou....holdest thy peace at this time" (v. 14). If we fail to improve our opportunities for service, "then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise....from another place," but we shall be losers. If we reject the word of the Lord, the Lord will reject us and choose another to perform our service (1 Sam. 15:23). God has given us each a kingdom of power and influence. 1. Talents, endowments and advantages. God gave Esther beauty and favor that she might deliver her people. No one is favored for himself alone. Wealth is given to be used for the starved and stricken. Every talent and gift is a responsibility intended as an instrument of blessing. "I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing," is ever God's order (Gen. 12:2). 2. Social position and circumstances. Esther's home was a palace. She was the bride of a king. God put her in the position that she might deliver her people. Our surroundings, our relationships, our family ties, our friendships, are all opportunities for service. 3. Spiritual experiences. Andrew learns of Jesus that he may tell his own brother Simon (John 1:40). The woman at the well is saved that "many of the Samaritans of that city" may believe on Christ through her testimony (John 4:39). 4. Spiritual privileges. (1) The Bible. Are you making it "the power of God unto salvation"? (Rom. 1:16). (2) Prayer. Is this weapon effectual with you in "supplication for all saints"? (Eph. 6:18). (3) The Holy Spirit. Have you tarried and been endued? (Luke 24:49). Are you witnessing with power because you have had your Pentecost? (Acts 1:8; 2:4).

"So will I go" (v. 16). There are times when we must say with Luther in response to appeals to spare ourselves, "It is not necessary that I should live, but it is necessary that I should go." We may not stop to consult circumstances or conveniences. It may be "not according to the law," but a fulfillment of love. In the Church of England in the seventeenth century a proposition was made for a collection in the churches for the French Protestants. Bishop Beveridge objected to it because it was a violation of the rubrics. Archbishop Tillotson said, "Ah, charity is higher than the rubrics." Humanity is above formality; love is higher than law.

"Esther put on her royal apparel" (v. 1) not from love of display. Upon becoming a queen, Esther had shown entire indifference to worldly display. All the necessary wardrobe was provided for the king's maidens (2:9). But there was an additional provision for individual choice of personal decoration as each might desire (2:13). But "when the turn of Esther....was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain....appointed" (2:15). She desired no ornaments.

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—A queen's brave plea saved a nation.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

HAMAN	{ Proud Greedy Cruel }	DESTROYED
Esther Mordecai	{ FAITHFUL }	{ Preserved Honored }

The story of Esther. Although the lesson includes but a small part of the book of Esther, the outline of the whole story is necessary to a proper study of to-day's lesson. Describe the condition of the Jews in Babylon, and give a brief review of the return of some of the captives to Jerusalem and the restoration of the temple. The story is intensely interesting, and each part of it and each person mentioned in it brings an important moral or spiritual lesson to us.

Haman's career. Haman was in some respects a man of ability, for he gained favor with the king and was promoted by him. Tell the story of his securing the king's consent to slay the Jews throughout the empire. Let the children tell you the things that Haman did that were wrong. From the story of Haman's gallows draw the lesson that they who attempt to gain honor or power by injuring others are themselves greatly injured sooner or later. The children may be able to give an incident illustrating this point. Haman was proud. He loved honor. He was deceitful in his plea before the king for the destruction of the Jews. He was without conscience and cruel. He was greedy. He was willing to destroy the Jewish race in order to have Mordecai slain, and he was glad to pay the king a great sum of money for the privilege of taking from the Jews their property. It is not surprising that he came to a wretched end.

Esther and Mordecai. Although Esther belonged to the Jewish race and was a captive, she became queen of Persia. Note the cruelty of Ahasuerus in sending away Queen Vashti. Draw from the king's great feast a lesson on temperance. Note the fact that Esther was an orphan and was reared by her cousin, Mordecai. She must have been trained in the Jewish religion, and knew the value of fasting and prayer. Imagine the feelings of Esther and Mordecai when they learned that their people were to be put to death. Tell the story of Esther's preparation by fasting and prayer to go before the king to plead for her people, and her success. The faithfulness of Mordecai in saving the king's life from those who plotted against him (2:21-23) should not be overlooked, and the outcome should be made clear by telling the story of how Mordecai was honored, and how Haman was appointed to lead the horse upon which Mordecai rode through the streets of Shushan. Note how perfectly God's providences fitted together in this entire history. The carefully laid plans of the wicked Haman were completely overthrown, and the people of God were wonderfully preserved. Observe the course taken by Esther to inform the king of Haman's wicked designs. Draw a contrast between the character of Haman and that of Mordecai. Impress the lesson that Esther heroically did what she could in the position she occupied. We are to do what we can in the place where we are.

LESSON VII

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Nov. 6.—Belshazzar's feast.—Dan. 5:1-31. Tu.—Ahasuerus' feast.—Esth. 1:1-22. Wed.—Conspiring against a drunken king.—1 Kings 16:8-14. Th.—Losing a battle.—1 Kings 20:1-21. Fr.—Inflamed by wine.—Isa. 5:8-12. Sat.—Nabal's feast.—1 Sam. 25:1-38. Su.—The Lord's day cometh as a thief.—1 Thess. 5:1-22.

BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST AND FATE—World's Temperance Lesson.—Dan. 5:1-31. Print 5:17-30.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 25-28)

SUPT.—17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation.

School.—18 O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour:

19 And for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down.

20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him:

21 And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will.

22 And thou his son, O Bel-shaz'zar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this;

23 But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified:

24 Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written.

25 And this is the writing that was written, ME'NE, ME'NE, TE'KEL, U-PHAR'SIN.

26 This is the interpretation of the thing: ME'NE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.

27 TE'KEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

28 PE'RES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

29 Then commanded Bel-shaz'zar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

30 In that night was Bel-shaz'zar the king of the Chal-deans slain.

*AMERICAN REVISION

17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another: nevertheless I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation. 18 O thou king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father the kingdom, and greatness, and glory, and majesty: 19 and because of the greatness that he gave him, all the peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he raised up, and whom he would he put down. 20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: 21 and he was driven from the sons of men, and his heart was made like the beasts', and his dwelling was with the wild asses; he was fed with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; until he knew that the Most High God ruleth in the kingdom of men, and that he setteth up over it whomsoever he will. 22 And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thy heart, though thou knewest all this, 23 but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou and thy lords, thy wives and thy concubines, have drunk wine from them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know; and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified. 24 Then was the part of the hand sent from before him, and this writing was inscribed.

25 And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. 26 This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and brought it to an end. 27 TEKEL; thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. 28 PERES; thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

29 Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with purple, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

30 In that night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? **School.**—God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. Eccl. 12:14.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—There is no escape from God's judgments.

TOPIC.—Decisive events.

OUTLINE.—I. Belshazzar's impious feast. II. The writing on the wall. III. Belshazzar reprieved. IV. The writing interpreted. V. The writing fulfilled.

TIME.—B. C. 538.

PLACE.—Babylon.

READ.—Dan. 2-3.

INTRODUCTION.—The events of this lesson occurred just before the close of the seventy years' captivity of the Jews in Babylon. The kingdom of Baby-

lon was falling into decay through the weakness of the rulers who succeeded Nebuchadnezzar. After his death the kingdom was in an unsettled condition for a time, and finally Nabonidus, not a member of the royal family, usurped the throne. It is thought that he married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, hence Belshazzar, their son, was a grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. Nabonidus left his capital some time before it was captured to engage in a campaign against the Persians and was defeated. Belshazzar was left in charge of the affairs of the kingdom and was virtually king. Nebuchadnezzar had made Babylon one of the most magnificent cities of antiquity. It was laid out in the form of a square about fourteen miles on each side. Its walls are spoken of as being three hundred fifty feet high and wide enough at the top for six chariots to drive abreast. The city was further protected by moats, or trenches, filled with water, surrounding the walls. There were twenty-five brazen gates in each of the four walls. The king's

palace was enclosed by a wall six miles in extent. Within this were the celebrated hanging gardens of antiquity.

COMMENTARY.—I. **BELSHAZZAR'S IMPIOUS FEAST** (vs. 1-4). Belshazzar was probably not more than seventeen years old at this time. The army of Cyrus was encamped about the city, but the youthful king seemed to think there was no danger, since the city was strongly fortified, and there appeared to be no possible way for the Persians to gain entrance to the city. Secure in these defenses Belshazzar and a thousand of the chief men of the nation gave themselves over to revelry. While inflamed with wine the king had the golden and silver drinking vessels brought in, which had been taken from the temple in Jerusalem, and they were sacrilegiously used during the feast by the guests in drinking wine. In addition to this act of desecration of the sacred vessels, the feasters gave honor to the gods of Babylon. Their impiety deserved severe rebuke. Their attention was arrested in a most startling manner. The revelry ceased and an end came to the sacrilege.

II. **THE WRITING ON THE WALL** (vs. 5-16). During this profane revelry a hand appeared writing upon the wall of the magnificent banqueting-hall. The king and his guests were startled at the sight, and immediately sought for the interpretation of the strange characters mysteriously written. The wise men of the kingdom were unable to tell the meaning, but the queen, Belshazzar's mother, thought of Daniel, the Jewish captive, and desired to have him brought in, for she had confidence in his skill. Daniel must have been at least eighty years old at that time. To him the king repeated the offer of great reward on condition that he should interpret the handwriting on the wall. The king knew Daniel by reputation as a man of superior powers, and was therefore willing to take advantage of his skill in the interpretation of the strange message.

III. **BELSHAZZAR REPROVED** (vs. 17-24). 17. **let thy gifts be to thyself**—Daniel was not influenced to undertake the explanation of the writing by the offer of gifts. He did not wish them. His one purpose was to declare truly the important message divinely sent to Belshazzar. 18. **I will read**—He showed no hesitancy, for he knew that God was with him. 19. **God gave**—The power to give greatness and honor was not in the idols which Belshazzar worshiped but in Jehovah. Nebuchadnezzar had recognized that power at times during his life. 20. **thy father**—Grandfather. This form of expression was used frequently in speaking of an ancestor. 21. **majesty**—In this verse Daniel gives a vivid picture of an Oriental king of ancient times possessed of absolute power. He had the power of life and death over his subjects. 22. **his mind hardened in pride**—His success as a ruler resulted in his becoming haughty and arrogant. 23. **he was deposed**—He was removed from being king, not by human power, but by an act of Jehovah. "He became insane, and the reins of government were taken out of his hands."—Clarke. 24. **driven from the sons of men**—Nebuchadnezzar's malady had caused him to dwell with the beasts of the field and to live like them. The account is given in Dan. 4. 25. **till he knew**—It took him seven years to learn the lesson that Jehovah is "the most high God." 26. **hast not humbled.... though thou knewest**—Belshazzar did not take the lesson of Nebuchadnezzar's calamity to heart, and Daniel charged home upon him his failure. The king knew his duty but failed to do it.

27. **hast lifted up thyself against the Lord**—Three serious charges were brought against the

king. 1. He had desecrated the sacred vessels of the house of the Lord by using them to drink wine in a drunken revelry. 2. He had given himself to the service of "gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone." 3. He had neglected the true God. Daniel may be classed with Nathan (2 Sam. 12: 7), Elijah (1 Kings 18: 17, 18), Jeremiah (Jer. 36: 27-31) and John the Baptist (Luke 3: 19, 20) in his fearlessness in reproving sin in high places. 24. **hand sent**—The hand was sent from God to portray in a most powerful manner the doom of the king and the nation because of their haughtiness and idolatry.

IV. **THE WRITING INTERPRETED** (vs. 25-29). 25. **the writing**—The word is not the one that ordinarily means to write, but one that means rather to print or stamp.—*Cam. Bible.* mene, mene—Numbered. The word "mene" has been identified with the Hebrew "maneh," a weight. **tekul**—Weighed. This has been found to be another weight. **upharsin**—Divided. It represents still another weight. It required the direct help of the Lord for Daniel to be able to give the proper interpretation to these comparatively simple words. Some have supposed that the words were written in such characters or in such a form that they were difficult to comprehend. The word, "mene," was repeated for emphasis.

26. **numbered thy kingdom**—The end was much nearer than Belshazzar imagined. It was to come that night. 27. **found wanting**—As the merchant weighs the gold or silver received in payment for wares and may find it short in weight, so Belshazzar had fallen short of what he should have been as king of a great nation. He was wanting in morality, piety and spiritual force. 28. **peres**—The singular form of the plural "pharsin." The prefix "u" means "and." **divided**—Broken up and given to another nation. The Medes and Persians had been united into one nation by Cyrus. 29. **purple** (R. V.)—This was a symbol of royalty. Daniel was given a place in the king's court. **chain of gold**—An emblem of his high office. **third ruler in the kingdom**—Daniel was next to Belshazzar, and Nabonidus was first in the kingdom.

V. **THE WRITING FULFILLED** (vs. 30, 31). 30. **in that night**—While the feast was in progress the enemy gained an entrance into Babylon, the city that was considered impregnable, and the kingdom of Belshazzar was at an end. It is said that the enemy diverted the Euphrates, which flowed through Babylon, from its natural channel, and then entered the city through the bed of the river. **Belshazzar... slain**—The punishment foretold had a speedy fulfillment. The king lost his life, but Daniel continued under the new kingdom. Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian appear to have been associated in the government of conquered Babylon. With regard to the transfer of power to the Medes, Driver says: "The idea of the writer appears to be that the Medes and Persians were acting in concert at the time of the capture of Babylon (v. 28); but that when the city was taken, Darius the Mede, by a joint agreement between the two peoples (or their rulers), received the kingdom, or (9: 1) was made king, and (ch. 6) took up his residence in Babylon as his capital."

QUESTIONS.—When was the time of this lesson? Who was king of the Babylonian empire? Who was Belshazzar? Who was Cyrus? What can you say of Babylon? Describe the feast. Of what sins was Belshazzar guilty? What occurred during the feast to excite the king? What was the interpretation of the writing? What occurred that night? How did Cyrus gain an entrance? What temperance teachings are there in this lesson?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. Connect this lesson with the preceding one. (1) Each contains incidents pertaining to Jewish captives in Babylon. (2) Belshazzar's feast was nearly seventy years earlier than the deliverance of the Jews in Esther's time. (3) Compare Belshazzar's feast with that of Esther. 2. Review briefly the recorded incidents in Daniel's life. 3. Daniel's probable age at the time of Belshazzar's feast.

II. THEME.—The doom of those who despise God.

III. BELSHAZZAR'S IMPIETY.—1. Belshazzar. (1) His ancestry. (2) His office. (3) His age. 2. The condition of Babylon. 3. The feast. (1) The host. (2) The guests. 4. The desecration of the sacred vessels of Jehovah's house. (1) They were designed for use only in connection with the worship of Jehovah. (2) Belshazzar put them to common use. (3) Not only so, but they were made use of in a drunken revelry. (4) More than that, at this feast the idols of Babylon were adored by the feasters while they drank wine from the sacred vessels. 5. Belshazzar had placed Jehovah on a level with the gods of other nations.

IV. BELSHAZZAR REBUKED.—1. Rebuked by the sight of the "fingers of a man's hand" writing on the wall. (1) The immediate effect upon the king. (2) His anxiety to have the writing interpreted. (3) The call for Daniel. 2. Rebuked by the words of Daniel. (1) The case of Nebuchadnezzar, with which the king was familiar, cited. (2) Belshazzar's heart was lifted up against Jehovah. (3) He had profaned the sacred vessels. (4) He had worshiped idols. (5) He had not acknowledged God.

V. BELSHAZZAR'S DOOM.—1. The interpretation of the mysterious writing. 2. The fearful judgments pronounced upon the king and his kingdom. 3. The honor bestowed upon Daniel. 4. The fulfillment of the words of the writing complete and immediate. 5. The agency in its fulfillment. 6. The doom of the drunkard and the drunkard-maker.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Decisive events.

I. For the king and kingdom of Babylon.

II. Leading to the deliverance of Judah.

I. For the king and kingdom of Babylon.

In this history we have the summing up of the case against a doomed man, a man who had failed of life's purpose. Little as Belshazzar dreamed of it, his life had been placed in the balances of eternal and unerring justice, and had been impartially weighed. On the one side of the balance were placed Belshazzar's opportunities, on the other his sins. The measure of his responsibility was proportioned to the degree of his knowledge. "Knowledge must be the first element in the balance of judgment where an intelligent being renders his account to a personal God." Belshazzar's knowledge of those things which befell Nebuchadnezzar rendered him inexcusable. Gentile monarch though he was, he had had exceptional opportunities for knowing the truth of God, yet he affronted God and put contempt on him. How appalling is the catalogue of aggravated crimes with which Belshazzar was charged,—obstinate impenitence, a proud, arrogant self-exaltation, a profane impiety, a marked insult cast upon the majesty of heaven, a studied withholding of the honor and glory due unto God. Such godlessness worked itself out and brought a final judgment on the long course of his guilty life.

The eye of the great Judge was upon that scene of profanity and dissipation. Then the conscience of Belshazzar awoke at an unexpected moment, and told him he had no good reason to expect good news from heaven. In vain he looked, in vain he called upon those around him and those who were under his control to help solve his perplexity. He proclaimed his own defeat at the moment when he had inspired others with the idea of victory and supremacy. It was a part of the punishment of Belshazzar to expose his dismay to the very persons whom he had led on in sin. Thus shame was united with terror. When a crisis comes men fall into their right relations. Belshazzar had riches, pleasures and worldly honor. He was absolute master of the greatest palace and the greatest city the world had ever seen, yet his thoughts rose clear and strong and broke through the fumes of intoxication and troubled him. He had had his opportunities, his examples, his warnings, yet he was drunken on the night of the siege, entirely unfitted for the responsibilities of his office. That night began with a great festival, a royal banquet in which no restraint was placed upon profanity, intemperance, vain amusements or worldly-mindedness of any character. Note the change in the program when the last solemn warning was given to the king, a warning which silenced in a moment the roar of impious mirth, a warning in which no mercy was exhibited. The king had been weighed in the balances of human opinion and approved. Then he was weighed in the balances of conscience and judged. Still further he was weighed in the balances of divine justice and condemned. Though boldest in vice Belshazzar was most destitute of courage when danger came. He took the strange writing as intended for himself. His eyes beheld the strange writing and at the same time looked in upon his own corrupt heart. Though he could not read the meaning he felt it, and the suspense was unbearable.

II. Leading to the deliverance of Judah. No terror blanched the cheek of Daniel. It was his Father's hand that wrote and he only could interpret God's sentence of doom. These events were bringing nearer the time when his people should see better days. He could be tranquil while Belshazzar trembled. The end of the seventy years of captivity for Judah was near. The march of justice may be slow, but her steps are resistless and her movements punctual. The prophets had declared the downfall of Babylon and the rise of the Medo-Persian empire. The sins and death of Belshazzar were foretold. The judgment of that night had long been threatened. Yet up to the very hour the probability seemed against such an occurrence, but when it came it settled forever the fate of its victims. Belshazzar's feast of boasting and blasphemy was the last ceremonial of the Chaldean kings. The vices of Belshazzar were vices of his family.

T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

<p>BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST WAS A SCENE OF IMPIETY. STRONG DRINK AND SOCIAL IMPURITY LED TO HIS RUIN.</p>	<p>WORLD'S TEMPERANCE SUNDAY.</p> <p>THE WORLD FOR CHRIST</p>	<p>OTHER KINGS AND NATIONS HAVE FALLEN BY THE SAME ENEMY.</p> <p>WHAT SHALL BE THE HISTORY OF OUR NATION?</p>
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Practical Applications

The last charge against Belshazzar was, "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified" (v. 23). Our lesson brings us in sharp contrast a man who glorified God and one who did not.

Sin refused. "Then Daniel.... said.... Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another" (v. 17). In his person Daniel was fair, well-favored; the admiration of Ashpenaz, Melzar and Arioch, the object of their tender regard. In his demeanor courteous, dignified, deferential, reverent and respectful; in his character abstemious, serious, devout, courageous; unblemished in private life, incorruptible in public office; a pattern of faith, prayer, wisdom, holiness and righteousness; in his attainments skilled in all learning "ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers" (Dan. 1: 20) that served in the king's realm.

Severe reproof. "Hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this" (v. 22). Daniel had the courage to tell the king the truth. Preacher and prophet should "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering" (2 Tim. 4: 2). Some years ago a prominent London brewer, who, strange to say, was a well-known philanthropist, wrote to Professor W. G. Blackie for a subscription for the Reformatory Union. The good man replied with some pointed questions and added, "I humbly believe that your gin palaces are tumbling into the gutter more human creatures than all the reformers of the kingdom are picking out." The beer brewer returned a touching letter begging the professor to pray for him.

Sovereign reward. "They clothed Daniel with purple.... and made proclamation concerning him" (v. 29, R. V.). Jesus said, "If any man serve me, him will my Father honour" (John 12: 26). Joseph served God by blameless living, and God made him the second ruler in the kingdom and the preserver of his race; type of him who should die to save the world. Abraham served God by offering Isaac, and God made his offspring as the stars of the sky and the sands of the sea. Moses served God by refusing worldly honor, and God made him the great emancipator, leader, lawgiver and historian and one of the companions of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. David served God in fighting Goliath, and became the honored king of Israel and the ancestor of the Messiah. The disciples served Christ in a life of self-sacrifice, and shall sit on twelve thrones ruling the twelve tribes of Israel. If we serve him he honors us by clothing us with garments of salvation (Isa. 61: 10).

Swift retribution. "That night was Belshazzar.... slain" (v. 30), that night of his feasting, drunkenness and profanity. While a desecrated vessel was still in his hand, and the praises of the false gods still on his lips, retribution came. Sentence against an evil work is not always speedily executed, for God is long-suffering; but frequently sin has been instantly punished, as in the case of Lot's wife (Gen. 19: 26); Gehazi (2 Kings 5: 27); Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5: 5-10); Herod (Acts 12: 23). The warning is, "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness.... and so that day come upon you unawares" (Luke 21: 34). "For.... the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. When they are saying, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them.... and they shall in no wise escape" (1 Thess. 5: 2, 3, R. V.). The nation or individual that defies God will meet with retribution.

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—Those who despise the Lord shall be destroyed.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

An impious feast

Belshazzar rebuked

A kingdom overthrown

Review exercises. The first review exercise might consist of the main facts in the story of Esther. The children will readily suggest them, and they can be arranged so as to make a connected whole. For the second exercise write upon the blackboard the events in Daniel's life as studied in previous lessons. Since this is a temperance lesson, the stand which Daniel and his three friends took with reference to eating the food from the king's table and drinking wine should be considered, and appropriate lessons should be drawn.

An impious feast. Read the story of Belshazzar's feast with the connected history often enough to have it perfectly in mind, and in the lesson hour tell it vividly to the class. Note the danger the feasters were in, although they seem to have been unaware of it. Call attention to the fact that the people of Babylon were given to drunkenness. Notice the wickedness of the king in using at this feast the sacred vessels that had been taken from the temple at Jerusalem. Another sin of which the feasters were guilty was that of idolatry. The story can be told in such a way that it will carry its application with it. Questions may be asked from time to time to make the moral lessons impressive.

Belshazzar rebuked. Describe the appearance of the hand as it was writing upon the wall. Write upon the blackboard the words that were written. State to the class that it was while the guests were engaged in their drunken and idolatrous revelry that the hand appeared. Picture the terror that seized the king as he saw the marvelous sight. The revelry was at an end, and the one absorbing question was, "What do those words mean?" Tell the story of Nebuchadnezzar's seven years of punishment for his forgetting God. Explain the meaning of the words written upon the wall and tell how Daniel was able to understand them. Belshazzar became proud and defied God, and a prophet was sent to him with a severe rebuke. Compare the beginning of the feast with the ending. Great preparations had been made, and the large assembly of the highest officers of the empire were expecting a night of revelry, but the feast ended suddenly.

A kingdom overthrown. Give a word picture of the magnificent city of Babylon fourteen miles square, with its strong and lofty walls, its one hundred gates of brass, its towers for defense and the beauty of its buildings. Picture the palace of the king and the feast in progress in the splendid banquet-hall. Then picture the great army of the enemy encamped around the city, and at length gaining an entrance. Note the suddenness with which death came to the young king, Belshazzar, and the Medes and Persians gained control of the kingdom. Impress upon the children the evil consequences of forgetting God. Destruction does not always come as suddenly as it came to Belshazzar, but sin will not go unpunished.

LESSON VIII

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Nov. 13.—Ezra's journey.—Ezra 8:15-36. Tu.—Ezra's purpose.—Ezra 7:1-10. Wed.—Ezra's royal grant.—Ezra 7:11-28. Th.—Ezra's list.—Ezra 8:1-14. Fr.—Ezra's prayer for Israel.—Ezra 9:1-15. Sat.—Separating Israel.—Ezra 10:1-17. Su.—Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers.—2 Cor. 5:20-6:18.

EZRA'S JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM.—Ezra 8: 15-36. Print 8: 21-32.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 21, 23)

*AMERICAN REVISION

SUPT.—21 Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of A-ha'va, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.

School.—22 For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him.

23 So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us.

24 Then I separated twelve of the chief of the priests, Sheb-e-bi'ah, Hash-a-bi'ah, and ten of their brethren with them,

25 And weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, even the offering of the house of our God, which the king, and his counsellors, and his lords, and all Is'ra-el there present, had offered:

26 I even weighed unto their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels an hundred talents, and of gold an hundred talents;

27 Also twenty basons of gold, of a thousand drams; and two vessels of fine copper, precious as gold.

28 And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto the Lord; the vessels are holy also; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering unto the Lord God of your fathers.

29 Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them before the chief of the priests and the Le'vites, and chief of the fathers of Is'ra-el, at Je-ru'sa-lem, in the chambers of the house of the Lord.

30 So took the priests and the Le'vites the weight of the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, to bring them to Je-ru'sa-lem unto the house of our God.

31 Then we departed from the river of A-ha'va on the twelfth day of the first month, to go unto Je-ru'sa-lem; and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way.

32 And we came to Je-ru'sa-lem, and abode there three days.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him. Ezra 8: 22.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—Prayer and consecrated efforts secure results.

TOPIC.—Ezra's faith.

OUTLINE.—I. Assembling for the journey. II. Prayer for success. III. Duties assigned. IV. The journey and arrival at Jerusalem.

TIME.—B. C. 458.

PLACES.—Babylon; Jerusalem.

READ.—Ezra 7-10.

INTRODUCTION.—Seventy-eight years had elapsed since the first return from Babylon to Jerusalem of 50,000 Jews under the leadership of Zerubbabel. It had been fifty-eight years since the completion of the second temple. Jerusalem had not been prosperous during this period, and the walls of the city still lay in ruins. The enemies of the Jews were numerous and active, inflicting much injury upon them, until finally the Jews came to consider it a wise policy to abandon their exclusiveness and join socially with their idolatrous and half-heathen neighbors. This course produced no satisfactory results, and later it became necessary to do away with these mixed marriages. The coming of Ezra with 7,000 Jews fresh from the scene of Judah's long captivity brought new courage and hope to the nation.

21 Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek of him a straight way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. 22 For I was ashamed to ask of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way, because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them that seek him, for good; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. 23 So we fasted and besought our God for this; and he was entreated of us.

24 Then I set apart twelve of the chiefs of the priests, even Shebeshiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them, 25 and weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, even the offering for the house of our God, which the king, and his counsellors, and his princes, and all Israel there present, had offered: 26 I weighed into their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels a hundred talents; of gold a hundred talents; 27 and twenty bowls of gold, of a thousand darics; and two vessels of fine bright brass, precious as gold. 28 And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto Jehovah, and the vessels are holy; and the silver and the gold are a freewill-offering unto Jehovah, the God of your fathers. 29 Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them before the chiefs of the priests and the Levites, and the princes of the fathers' houses of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of Jehovah. 30 So the priests and the Levites received the weight of the silver and the gold, and the vessels, to bring them to Jerusalem unto the house of our God.

31 Then we departed from the river Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy and the liar-in-wait by the way. 32 And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days.

In Babylon the Jews had maintained their love for Jerusalem and their devotion to their religious system. The Jews of this second return brought strength and inspiration to their brethren in Jerusalem to build up the walls of the city, and to establish more firmly the nation and the national religion. The two great names prominently connected with this new revival were Ezra and Nehemiah, but Nehemiah's work was some years later than that of Ezra. Artaxerxes, the king of Persia, was favorable to Ezra and aided him and his companions with large gifts.

COMMENTARY.—I. ASSEMBLING FOR THE JOURNEY (vs. 15-20). The chapter from which the lesson is taken gives more fully an account of what is summarized in the first ten verses of the preceding chapter. We have in the verses preceding the lesson a partial catalogue of those who went with Ezra from Babylon to Jerusalem. The place of assembly was probably not far from Babylon, near one of the canals connected with the Euphrates River at Ahava, though some think the people gathered near the Euphrates. When Ezra found that there were none of the Levites present to make the journey to Jerusalem, he sent for some of them in order that the temple service might be provided with ministers of this rank. While the priests and

Levites were descendants of the tribe of Levi, the priests were the direct descendants of Aaron and the Levites were descendants of Levi through other lines. Ezra's call met with a ready response and a considerable number of Levites became members of the expedition. Of the 50,000 Jews who returned from captivity with Zerubbabel there were over 4,000 priests and only seventy-four Levites.

II. PRAYER FOR SUCCESS (vs. 21-23). **21. proclaimed a fast**—Fasting was recognized as a means of successfully approaching God in prayer. Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast when threatened by his enemies (2 Chron. 20: 3), Jehoiakim proclaimed a fast (Jer. 36: 9), and Esther ordered the observance of a fast that she might approach the king on behalf of her people (Esth. 4: 16). Fasting indicates submission to God's will and humility, and is an expression of dependence upon God and faith in him. By fasting one places spiritual good above temporal. **that we might afflict ourselves**—"That we might humble ourselves."—*R. V. to seek... a right way*—This was an acknowledgment that Ezra felt his insufficiency for so important an undertaking, and an expression of his confidence in God's power and willingness to render aid. **our substance**—Goods, or property.

22. ashamed to require... soldiers—Ezra had expressed to the king his strong confidence in God's protecting care over those who trust him, and it would be inconsistent to ask for a band of soldiers to ward off the attacks of enemies. **the enemy**—The route to Jerusalem lay through regions infested with bands of robbers, ready to fall upon unprotected travelers. Ezra recognized the danger, but he was determined to depend upon the protecting hand of Jehovah, whose servants he and his companions were. **hand of our God**—A symbol of the divine power, protection and love. **23. intreated**—True prayer is never offered in vain. The company gathered "at the river of Ahava" believed in the importance of their divinely-appointed mission, recognized the dangers of the journey and offered the prayer of faith. They were confident that their prayer was heard, and the following months showed that the Lord "was intreated" of them, for their way was made safe and prosperous to them.

III. DUTIES ASSIGNED (vs. 24-30). **24. the chief of the priests**—Not high priests, but leading men, especially distinguished for age or wisdom, among the priests that were with Ezra.—*Whedon. Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren*—According to vs. 15-19 these were Levites. The passage, "Besides Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them" (*R. V., margin*), indicates that in addition to the twelve priests, twelve Levites were appointed to have the charge of the treasures. **25. the offering for the house of our God** (*R. V.*)—A dedicatory offering. **which the king... had offered**—The king and the chief men in his kingdom were deeply impressed with the power of the God of Israel and with the sacredness of the worship offered to him, and were ready to contribute liberally to that worship. They joined with the Jews in their offerings for the temple service. **26. weighed**—Money was mostly reckoned by weight. **unto their hand**—The treasures were carefully weighed and a strict account was kept of the amount in order that there might be no loss. They must deliver in Jerusalem the exact amount that was weighed into "their hand" in Babylon. **six hundred and fifty talents of silver**—At \$1,600 to the talent the silver would amount to more than \$1,000,000, and the silver vessels \$160,000. **of gold an hundred talents**—The

talent of gold was worth upward of \$25,000, and the value of the one hundred talents was at least \$2,500,000. **27. a thousand darics** (*R. V.*)—The daric was a coin worth about five dollars. **fine copper**—A kind of brass in which was possibly a mixture of gold. This was an alloy highly prized by the ancients on account of the difficulty of its production and because of the high polish which it was capable of taking. The total value of the treasures has been placed at from \$4,000,000 to \$5,000,000.

28. ye are holy unto the Lord—The priests and Levites had been set apart and consecrated to the service of the Lord. **the vessels are holy also**—They were separated from profane uses and were set apart for the temple service. **a freewill offering**—It is not the abundance of the gifts that affords satisfaction to the giver, but the spirit of devotion with which he makes the offering. **29. watch ye, and keep them**—A sacred trust was committed to them for which they must give account, and they were exhorted to exercise the utmost diligence. **until ye weigh them before the chief of the priests... at Jerusalem**—There could be no cessation of watchfulness until they had deposited the treasures intact with the proper officers at the house of Jehovah. **chambers**—Rooms in the temple used as store-rooms and as places of meeting for the priests. **30. so the priests and the Levites received** (*R. V.*)—This expression goes to prove that the body of men to whom Ezra entrusted the precious things consisted of two groups of twelve, the one priests, the other Levites.—*Cam. Bible*. They accepted the responsibility and faithfully discharged their duty.

IV. THE JOURNEY AND ARRIVAL AT JERUSALEM (vs. 31-36). **31. twelfth day... first month**—About the first of April. The company arrived at Jerusalem about the first of July. **delivered us from... the enemy**—They were saved from the attacks of those who would naturally have fallen upon them for the immense wealth they were carrying with them. **such as lay in wait**—This explains more fully who the "enemy" was. Whether an attack was made we are not told. The deliverance may either imply the repulse of such an attack or the absence of any hostile movement.—*Ryle*.

32. abode there three days—Thus allowing time for rest and for making plans for future action. **33-36**. The next step was to deliver the treasures to the priests and Levites authorized to receive them at the temple. An account was taken of the weight of the silver and the gold, as well as the number of the sacred vessels, which would correspond with the inventory which was made before leaving Babylon. A burnt offering was made for those who had made the long pilgrimage, consisting of a bullock for each of the twelve tribes of Israel, eight rams and a goat for each tribe, and seventy-seven lambs. The number of the lambs was the "magnification of the perfect number." The pilgrims were assisted on their journey by the representatives of the Persian government, who also aided in the offerings for the house of God. This was an added token of the Lord's care.

QUESTIONS.—Who was Ezra? What great work did he undertake? What aid was given him by the king of Persia? How long had it been since the first return from captivity under Zerubbabel? How many accompanied Ezra from Babylon to Jerusalem? What was the value of the treasures carried with them? What was the occasion for a call to fasting and prayer? How was the faith of Ezra shown? How long were the people in making the journey? What was done upon the arrival at Jerusalem?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. Note the prominent events and truths of the last lesson. 2. Review briefly the two lessons already taken from the book of Ezra. 3. The date of the decree of Cyrus. 4. The dates of the laying of the foundation of the house of the Lord and of its completion. 5. The condition of the Jews in Jerusalem. 6. The condition of the Jews in Babylon. 7. The offices and character of Ezra.

II. THEME.—A successful undertaking.

III. THE COMPANY ASSEMBLED.—1. The attitude of the king toward Ezra. 2. Ezra's interest in the law of God and his people. 3. The number gathered at the river of Ahava. 4. The lack of Levites, and how supplied. 5. The length of the stay near the Ahava. 6. The length of the journey before the company.

IV. THE PREPARATION MADE.—1. The call to observe a fast. 2. The declarations made before the king respecting the God of Israel. 3. Ezra ashamed to ask the king for an army for protection. 4. Evidences of Ezra's faith in God. 5. The results of the season of fasting and prayer. 6. The appointment of the priests and Levites to take charge of the treasures. 7. Their responsibility. 8. The systematic way of guarding the treasure. 9. The total value of the treasure. 10. The purpose for which it was contributed. 11. By whom contributed.

V. THE JOURNEY COMPLETED.—1. The length of time occupied. 2. The date of the journey. 3. The deliverance from enemies. 4. The three days' rest. 5. The treasure safely deposited in the temple. 6. The assistance rendered by the officers of the king. 7. The sacrifices offered. 8. A great success because there was great devotion as well as great faith.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Ezra's faith.

- I. Called for specific preparation.
- II. Sought definite divine direction.
- III. Observed all diligence in duty.

I. Called for specific preparation. Ezra was greatly blessed in his desire and effort to lead his people back to Jerusalem. He "had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it." He was a safe man to become the leader of the returning captives. He discerned the hand of God in every event and always expressed a pious acknowledgment of the divine goodness. He undertook his great work in the consciousness of divine approval. "I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me." The circumstances in which Ezra was placed were difficult. He had to contend with the scorn and opposition of pagans and with the corruptions of his own people, but with the help of God and the king he organized his company. His upright heart made him diligent in preparing for effectual service. He took time. He made careful inspection and corrected the deficiency in the make-up of his company, before he began his journey. He coupled true faith with thorough preparation. When he had done his part faithfully he could believe for success in his long journey with so large a company.

II. Sought definite divine direction. It seemed inconsistent to Ezra that he should solicit a band of pagan soldiers to protect God's people and the treasures of God's temple. He shrank from anything that seemed like inconsistency between his creed and his practise. He was on his guard to harmonize his expressed faith and his active life.

If the king had detected any inconsistency in Ezra he might have ceased to be favorable to his cause and might have prevented or delayed the return to Jerusalem. Ezra had not only an earnest desire to be right with God, but also to seem right in the presence of men. It took some strength of principle and some true faith to abstain from asking what it would have been so natural to ask, so easy to get and so comfortable to have. The absolute surrender and forsaking of external helps seemed essential to his expression of reliance on God. It was a time when faith in God had to supersede the provisions of ordinary prudence, but it was effected only in the spirit of sincere and earnest dependence upon God. Ezra, with a fine spiritual discernment, saw the hour for simple trust had come and by not asking for a band of soldiers he brought to view the gracious and sufficient guidance and protection of God. He was assured in his own heart that God was his Father, Protector and Guide. Ezra's situation afforded him an opportunity for asserting that great principle of confidence in God, under very trying circumstances. His language was in striking contrast with the general state of opinion around him. He knew he was right and feared not to be singular. When faith and prudence gave different counsel Ezra chose to walk by faith, and history proves that he did right. Men of such understanding are the gifts of God. Failure more often results from trusting in means than in trusting in God alone, who can work with or without men, as he wills. In proclaiming a fast and in seeking the throne of grace, they sought to know God's way and to commit themselves to his guidance and protection. They felt the importance of the occasion and their dependence upon divine help. They did not depend upon their own policy and strength or the fact that Ezra had been commissioned to lead them or that the king was favorable to their plans. By fasting and prayer they sought and obtained God's promise of help.

III. Observed all diligence in duty. Ezra felt the responsibility of being entrusted with so much treasure. He took as much care in providing for its safe arrival in Jerusalem as he did in arranging for suitable persons to make up the returning company. Not to fear when there is reason is as great weakness as to fear unduly without reason. Many dangers were before them. They must do their best to guard against loss and then faith could stand every test. Ezra was not returning to Jerusalem with his fellow countrymen to enjoy the comforts of a well-ordered government. There was much to do and much sorrow of heart to endure. The Persian king knew the unsettled and disordered state of the colony which had returned to rebuild the temple. Their first leaders, Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Haggai and Zechariah, were dead, and reform was the urgent need. Ezra was sent forth to suppress disorder and to enforce the observance of law. It was well that he had faith in God.

T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

THEY BEGAN BY FASTING AND PRAYER.	THE HAND OF OUR GOD IS UPON ALL THEM FOR GOOD.	WE JOURNEY TO HEAVEN.
WERE DILIGENT IN BUSINESS.		GOD ENTRUSTS US WITH GREAT RICHES.
FERVENT IN SPIRIT.		PROTECTS US ON OUR JOURNEY.
SERVING THE LORD.		

Practical Applications

"To seek . . . a right way" (v. 21). It is an encouraging condition in one's life if he is deeply in earnest to know what is right. Among all the ways that appeal to us as the best for us to take, there is but one "right" way. All are divided into two classes, the right and the wrong. Jesus classified them as the broad way and the narrow way (Matt. 7: 13, 14). The right way is a clean way. No unclean thing is found in it. Pride, deception, greed, lust, theft, murder, profanity and all othersins are excluded. Those who walk the right way have had their "heartssprinkled from an evil conscience." The right way is a safe way. Ezra was seeking by prayer and fasting for a way of safety and he found it. He sought it in the right manner. People can see farther in looking for the safe way when they search for it upon their knees, than when they hurry about here and there, to try first one way and then another to see whether it is safe or not. Ezra and his company had treasures which the desert robbers would have been glad to secure, and the scribe and leader sought the way that was safe. We each have a treasure that the arch-robber would be glad to take from us, but we are safe as long as we keep in the "right way." Inasmuch as "there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14: 12), it is essential that we obtain God's wisdom to direct us to the right way. The right way is a joyful way. With regard to those in it we read, "And the ransomed of the Lord . . . shall obtain joy and gladness" (Isa. 35: 10). It is a joyful way because those who walk in it are conscious of the divine approval, and as they labor in the service of the Master they realize the joy of service. Those who are in the right way "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Pet. 1: 8). They do not walk in it simply for the joy that is found therein, but because it is right, and the joy is added.

"The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him" (v. 22). Ezra believed these words and proved his belief in them by his acts. He had made this profession before King Artaxerxes and the Lord signally honored him for his faith. The hand of God is sometimes upon his people for good when they do not realize it, and even think it impossible. Jacob said, "All these things are against me" (Gen. 42: 36), when, in fact, provisions were being made for the preservation of the lives of himself and his family. Job's faith in God's wisdom, love and power was strong when he exclaimed, "He knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23: 10). God's hand is an emblem of power. "He had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power" (Hab. 3: 4). It is an emblem of protection. "Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones" (Zech. 13: 7). "No man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 10: 29). Happy are we if our faith is strong enough so that we can recognize the hand of God upon us, even when to the natural eye it appears to be the hand of an enemy. The condition of his hand being upon us "for good" is simple. It is that we "seek him." If we diligently seek him, we may rest assured that he will do the best for us that can possibly be done. Our loving hearts will bless our Father's hand, even when it is laid upon us in chastening. There is no place of such perfect rest as in the hand of God. David realized the difference between being in the hand of God and in the hand of his enemies. God's hand is upon us for good when we are resting in his hand.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—There is a reward for those who trust God.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

EZRA'S

{ Desire
Earnestness
Faith

A Successful Journey

Ezra's desire. Do not fail to review the story of Belshazzar's feast. This can be done by asking different ones of the class questions calling forth the main points in the story and the lessons to be impressed. Recall the story of the first company of exiles who returned from Babylon to Jerusalem about seventy-eight years before the return spoken of in the present lesson. Recall also the building of the temple in the place of the one destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. Tell the story of Ezra's life in Babylon. He was a priest and also a scribe. He was greatly interested in the law of the Lord and in his fellow Jews in Jerusalem, who were not keeping the law as they should. He desired to go to Jerusalem that he might be a help to them. Show what a blessing it is to those who give and sacrifice for the work of the Lord, and what encouragement comes to the work in general through such devotion.

Ezra's earnestness. His desire made him earnest to labor and suffer for his people. It is a common occurrence for one to see another in need and, instead of helping him himself, depend upon a third person to assist him. Sydney Smith said, "Whenever A sees B in trouble, he is sure to say, with due consideration, that C ought to help him." There are several grains of truth in the statement. When a person is in danger, many of the spectators will say, "Somebody help him quickly," while a few will at once go to his rescue. Ezra's earnestness to help strengthen the Jewish nation in Jerusalem led him to make every needful sacrifice to that end.

Ezra's faith. Tell about the long journey between Babylon and Jerusalem, and the danger that travelers were in from desert robbers. Ezra had given his testimony of the great love and power of his God before the king. Although there were women and children and great amounts of gold and silver in the company, Ezra did not ask the king for soldiers to protect them, but fasted and prayed, expecting the Lord to hear his prayer and preserve the people. Recall the preservation of Jeremiah, Daniel and the Hebrew children by divine power. Call upon the children of the class to relate any instances of answers to prayer with which they are acquainted.

A successful journey. Note that the people for the most part traveled on foot. They had a definite purpose. They were returning to the land which God had given them, and to the house of Jehovah and to the worship of the God whom they had been serving in a strange land. They trusted that the Lord to whom they had prayed with fasting would preserve them from their enemies and bring them to the sacred city. How much interested are we in the Sunday-school and in the services of the Lord's house? The people quickly offered sacrifices to the Lord upon their return to Jerusalem, thus renewing the public worship of God.

LESSON IX

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Nov. 20.—Nehemiah's prayer.—Neh. 1: 1-11. Tu.—Prayer answered.—Neh. 2: 1-8. Wed.—Moses' prayer.—Num. 14: 1-19. Th.—Samuel's prayer.—1 Sam. 7: 3-14. Fr.—Daniel's prayer instantly answered.—Dan. 9: 1-23. Sat.—The prayer of the church.—Acts 12: 1-19. Su.—The prayer of Jesus.—John 17: 1-26.

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER.—Neh. 1: 1-11.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verse 9)

SUPT.—1 The words of Ne-hem-i'ah the son of Hach-a-li'ah. And it came to pass in the month Chis-leu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shu'shan the palace,

School.—2 That Ha-na'ni, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Ju'dah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Je-ru'sa-lem.

3 And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Je-ru'sa-lem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.

4 And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven,

5 And said, I beseech thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments:

6 Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Is-ra-el thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Is-ra-el, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned.

7 We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Mo'ses.

8 Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Mo'ses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations:

9 But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there.

10 Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand.

11 O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cup-bearer.

*AMERICAN REVISION

1 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah.

Now it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace, 2 that Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men out of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, that were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. 3 And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.

4 And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days; and I fasted and prayed before the God of heaven, 5 and said, I beseech thee, O Jehovah, the God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and lovingkindness with them that love him and keep his commandments: 6 let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee at this time, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, while I confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee. Yea, I and my father's house have sinned: 7 we have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the ordinances, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses. 8 Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye trespass, I will scatter you abroad among the peoples: 9 but if ye return unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them, though your outcasts were in the uttermost part of the heavens, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen, to cause my name to dwell there. 10 Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand. 11 O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who delight to fear thy name; and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. (Now I was cupbearer to the king.)

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? **School.**—The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avail-eth much. James 5: 16.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—Love for God's cause inspires effectual prayer.

TOPIC.—Piety and patriotism.

OUTLINE.—I. A report from the land of Judah. II. Nehemiah's prayer for help.

TIME.—B. C. 445.

PLACE.—Shushan, in Persia.

INTRODUCTION.—The book of Nehemiah was anciently considered a part of the book of Ezra, and later it was called Second Ezra. It gives an account of incidents closely connected with those recorded in the book of Ezra. The first return of Jewish captives from Babylon is recorded in Ezra and also the building of the temple. Ezra gives an account of the second return, or the one which he conducted from Babylon to Jerusalem thirteen years before this time. Nehemiah records his own journey to the land of Judah, the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, and various reforms which were

accomplished among the Jews. Nehemiah is the latest historical book of the Old Testament. The book breathes forth a spirit of deep devotion to the cause of God, and shows the nature, purpose and results of true prayer.

COMMENTARY.—I. A REPORT FROM THE LAND OF JUDAH (vs. 1-3). 1. words—"History."—*R. V., margin.* Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah—He is thus distinguished from the Nehemiah who accompanied Zerubbabel upon the first return from captivity (Ezra 2: 2), and from the Nehemiah who assisted in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem (ch. 3: 16). It is not known to what tribe he belonged, but from v. 2 and ch. 2: 3 it is thought he was of the tribe of Judah. He was a man of deep devotion, a man of prayer and a man of deeds. **Chisleu**—The ninth month of the Jewish year, corresponding to the latter part of November and the first part of December. **twentieth year**—The twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes Longim-

anus, king of Persia. Ezra had gone with his company from Babylon to Jerusalem thirteen years before this. **Shushan**—Two hundred fifty miles east of Babylon. It was one of the three capitals of Persia, and the favorite winter residence of the king. **palace**—Nehemiah, as an officer in the king's court, performed the duties of his office in the palace. The magnificence of this building is shown by the fact that its ruins, discovered many years ago, cover about three thousand square feet.

2. Hanani—From ch. 7: 2 it appears that Hanani was a brother of Nehemiah, which is probable, yet the term "brother" is used in the scriptures to denote other near relatives. **men of Judah**—"Out of Judah."—*R. V.* Some who had returned from Judah. **had escaped**—This has reference to those who had gone to Jerusalem from the captivity in Babylon. **left of the captivity**—Those who had returned from the captivity and had survived the hardships of the restoration. **concerning Jerusalem**—Nehemiah desired to know how his people were succeeding in their own land in the restoration of the temple worship and in the reorganization of the nation. The fact that he held an honorable position in the royal palace did not keep him from being solicitous for the prosperity of his fellow Jews in Jerusalem.

3. the province—The land of Judah was one of the provinces of the Persian empire. **in great affliction**—Their subjection to Persia forced itself upon the Jews at every turn. The tribute imposed on them was a heavy burden to a poor people. Jewish recruits had doubtless been forced into the Persian armies. The country was pillaged in open day, and many Jews were carried into slavery by nightly surprises, while the corpses of murdered men were often found on the road.—*Geikie*. The stand which the Jews had taken in refusing their neighbors the privilege of joining with them for the purpose of building the house of the Lord, and in breaking up the practise of intermarriage of the Jews with outside nations had exposed the Jews to the hostile attacks of other peoples. **the wall.... is broken down**—After the destruction of the walls by Nebuchadnezzar one hundred forty years before, it was partly rebuilt by Ezra. The enemies of the Jews had destroyed the walls and gates of Jerusalem, thus rendering the city virtually unprotected. Stanley says, "In those days, rather, one may say, in those countries of disorder, a city without locked gates and lofty walls was no city at all."

II. NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER FOR HELP (vs. 4-11).

4. wept, and mourned—Nehemiah's intense interest in the welfare of his own nation moved him to weep and lament when he heard of their affliction. We remember that the Oriental is of an excitable disposition, and quickly affected by joy or sorrow; but the language here indicates that Nehemiah's sadness was not a mere passing emotion, but continued for days and months, and led him to self-denial and prolonged activity. **fasted, and prayed**—Nehemiah has set the world an example of prayer in times of distress. He fasted and prayed until his course of duty became clear. "As the mourning, so the praying lasted four months. This proved his earnestness and his faith." **God of heaven**—This phrase, which becomes prominent in the later books of the Old Testament, was a usual title of the Supreme Being among the Persians.—*III. Notes*.

5. beseech—A word denoting intensity of supplication. **Lord God of heaven**—"Jehovah, the God of heaven."—*R. V.* "Jehovah" denotes the self-existing One; "God," the invisible One. **great and terrible**—Expresses his greatness and power. **covenant and mercy**—"Covenant" refers to God's

definite promises. "Mercy" refers to his loving character, which gives more than is pledged.—*Hurlbut*.

6. let thine ear now be attentive—Nehemiah approached the Lord as a true suppliant. He was convinced of God's greatness; he came with humility; he begged for a hearing; and he had an important petition to make. **day and night**—This expression shows his earnestness and importunity. **both I and my father's house have sinned**—The suppliant made genuine confession of sin. He had no disposition to spare himself. He acknowledged that the responsibility for national sins rested upon individuals and families, and that the deplorable condition of the nation existed because of their sin. **7. corruptly**—Among other things the Jews were guilty of oppression (ch. 5: 1-7, 10, 11), the desecration of the Sabbath (ch. 13: 15), and intermarriage with heathen nations (Ezra 9: 1, 2). **commandments**—Divine precepts to govern the life. **statutes**—Rules relating to the Jewish religious system. **judgments**—The precepts of justice relative to our conduct to one another.—*Clarke*.

8. remember.... the word—Nehemiah strengthened the force of his supplication by pleading God's promises. **if ye transgress**—This is not a quotation, but a reference to the general sense of various passages, as, for instance, Lev. 26: 27-30; Deut. 28: 45-52, 62-67.—*Pulpit Com.* **9. if ye turn unto me**—It is an exhibition of God's mercy that man is given an opportunity to repent and to be restored to the divine favor. "When we turn to sin God turns to discipline; when we turn to righteousness he turns to mercy."—*Gray*. **will I gather them**—God would not forget their location, no matter how far they might become scattered through their sin. The cry of the penitent always reaches the ear of the Lord. **place that I have chosen**—Jerusalem, and the temple there. **10. these are thy servants and thy people**—Nehemiah goes a step further in his intercession and uses argument. He has referred to God's promise and now pleads that the Jews are included in that promise. **whom thou hast redeemed**—The redemption, here spoken of, looks back, beyond the recent restoration from Babylon, to the original deliverance from Egypt, which sealed forever the relation between Jehovah and his people.—*Cam. Bible*. Nehemiah pleads this relation and the great care the Lord had exercised for the nation. **11. thy servant**—Nehemiah. **grant him mercy**—He prayed that he might have favor in the sight of the king. "Nehemiah had decided that to remove the reproach of Jerusalem he must go there in person; that to do so he must obtain the king's permission; to get his permission he must be in special favor with him."—*Rawlinson*. **the king's cupbearer**—As the term indicates, he had charge of the wines used by the king. This was an important office, and one in which only a most trustworthy person could be allowed. He stood by the king's side at every meal and had easy access to him at all times. He bore the grave responsibility of seeing that no poisons were mixed with the king's drink. The cup-bearer often became the king's trusted counselor. Nehemiah was highly esteemed by the king.

QUESTIONS.—How long after Ezra's journey to Jerusalem was this lesson? Where did Nehemiah live? How did he learn of the affairs in Jerusalem? How was he affected? Why was he thus affected? What was the condition of those in Jerusalem? How did Nehemiah pray for his people? What office did he hold? Who was king at this time? How was Nehemiah's position an advantage to him? In what way is Nehemiah an example for us?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. Trace the steps thus far in the return from captivity. 2. The office and character of Ezra. 3. The date of Ezra's return. 4. The prominent lessons taught by Ezra's return. 5. The attractions at Jerusalem for the Jews in Babylon. 6. Reasons why all the Jews did not go back to the land of Judah. 7. Reasons why multitudes are in spiritual captivity to-day.

II. THEME.—Effectual prayer.

III. A GREAT NEED.—1. Nehemiah. (1) Nationality. (2) Ancestry. (3) Office. 2. Hanani. (1) A Jew returned from Jerusalem. (2) A relative of Nehemiah. (3) His story told. 3. Josephus says that Nehemiah was walking one day outside the palace and heard men talking in the Jewish language. He approached them and found there his brother, Hanani, from whom he learned the conditions in Jerusalem. 4. The sacred city was in a sad plight. 5. There existed much hostility toward the Jews. 6. Reasons for this hostility. 7. The condition of the gates and walls. 8. The importance of city walls in the East.

IV. A GREAT LOVE FOR ZION.—1. *Psa. 137: 5, 6* sets forth the love of the pious Jew for the sacred city. 2. The character of Nehemiah and his devotion to God. 3. Evidences of his love for Jerusalem. (1) He "wept, and mourned certain days." (2) He fasted. (3) He prayed for months. (4) He denied himself. 4. Nehemiah's love for his people and the house of God is an example for us. 5. There is an ancient wall in Jerusalem, known as the Jews' wailing-place, where the Jews go to mourn the loss of Jerusalem's former glory. Instead of mourning thus, they should turn toward Jesus, the Messiah.

V. AN EXTRAORDINARY PRAYER.—1. The prayer was prompted by Nehemiah's knowledge of the needs of his people and his love for Zion. 2. His prayer was directed to Jehovah. 3. His prayer contained confession. 4. It was offered in faith. 5. Nehemiah pleaded God's promises. 6. He was ready to labor and sacrifice that his prayer might be answered. 7. The results of Nehemiah's prayer.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Piety and patriotism.

I. Distinguished Nehemiah in Babylon.

II. Moved Nehemiah to prevailing prayer.

I. Distinguished Nehemiah in Babylon. As a counselor, statesman, and courtier in the court of the Persian king, Nehemiah was a distinguished favorite, but to him such honors did not have as much weight as the relationship he sustained to the Jews in Jerusalem. He was faithful to his trust where he was providentially placed, but his heart was at the same time yearning for the welfare of his people. In that feeble remnant was bound up the prosperity of true religion. The secular position which Nehemiah held did not lessen his sympathy with his countrymen, but gave him opportunity for manifesting it, and at the same time to help his brethren. Neither distance nor place nor dignity of station could alienate his affections for them. Nehemiah was true to his nation and loyal to his God. He took upon himself the burden of his country's woes. He recognized a divine sovereignty in human affairs. He was prepared to make sacrifice in the cause of patriotism. In Nehemiah piety and patriotism were blended and intertwined. His case proves that God never places

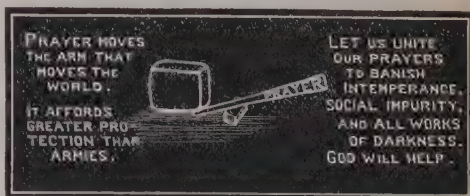
men in situations where it is impossible for them to love and obey him. At the proper time he brings them into contact with their life-work. In Nehemiah is set forth the power of one man to do great things for God when God is with him. All true service for the world must begin with close communion with God. He has his servants in all conditions of life, and through them he is made known to the world. Nehemiah's fidelity to his convictions commanded respect apart from the merit of the convictions themselves. Every detail in a good man's life is a part of the divine plan.

II. Moved Nehemiah to prevailing prayer.

Nehemiah first sought to gain accurate information from a reliable source, both as to the need that existed and the nature of the work that had to be done. To him sympathetic contemplation of surrounding sorrows was a duty. His way of helping men was in sharing their burdens. So deeply moved was he that he put himself on a level with his brethren and then implored God's mercy. Nehemiah was burdened with a single great desire—help from God in behalf of his nation. His profound grief on behalf of others was perfectly consistent with his personal enjoyment of the divine favor. His burdened heart found relief in prayer. It was no trifle, no imaginary sorrow that brought tears from his eyes. He did not restrict prayer to spiritual needs only. He embraced the affairs of every-day life and all lawful undertakings, great and small. Nehemiah counted prayer a practical reliance in achieving business results. His best way to succeed in any enterprise with men was to commend them to God. His brethren in Jerusalem were more needy than ever and he was not indifferent to their condition. All personal ambition was lost sight of in his desire for their good. Nehemiah associated national disaster with sin. He pleaded God's former mercies to his people. Fast- ing joined with supplication expressed his sorrow for sin, sympathy with his afflicted brethren, distress to see the cause of God in reproach and earnestness in seeking help from him. Such godly grief brought visitations of God's help. Nehemiah's prayer was reverent, persistent, penitent, scriptural, definite and confident. The great test of self-sacrifice was seen in his offering himself as God's instrument. God values men by their desires. The work of any real value is done by those whose hearts have been touched with the feelings of the miseries which they set themselves to cure. When Nehemiah had laid the cause of his people before the Lord and pleaded his promises in their behalf, he could confidently ask that the king might be inclined to favor his plan of going to Jerusalem. The people there needed a revival. They needed to fortify their city against intruders. It was necessary that some one should lead them. Nehemiah was ready to sacrifice ease, wealth and prominence in the king's palace, that he might bring his people into better circumstances.

T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise



Practical Applications

Prayer is the key-note of our lesson. The spirit of prayer is the life of the Christian.

Pray sympathetically. Nehemiah, the exiled Jew, was a favored servant of Artaxerxes in the splendid palace of the Persian city of Susa (v. 1). There he heard of the sad condition of God's people many miles away (v. 2). Himself beyond any apparent possibility of suffering or want, his heart went out in longing to the remnant of the captivity in great affliction and reproach (v. 3). For these he "wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed" (v. 4). He loved his people. He sought their good and not his own pleasure. He was ready to leave home, friends, position and plenty to endure the perils of a long journey and share the trials of a disheartened people in a land a thousand miles away which he had never seen. We pray sympathetically when we forget ourselves in an intensity of desire for others.

Pray reverently. "O Lord God of heaven" (v. 5). "Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open" (v. 6). Nehemiah recognized the condescension of "Jehovah," the self-existent, immutable, everlasting "God of heaven," infinitely above him and sovereign over him, in humbling himself to see and hear the things done on earth. Though we come "boldly unto the throne of grace," we come reverently. Nehemiah began with reverent praise. The great God, infinite in perfection, the "terrible" God, dreaded by foes and revered by friends, is righteous in judgments, faithful to his word, merciful and kind. Some one suggests that before we approach the throne in prayer we should always pause a little to reflect upon who and what God is. "Hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night" (v. 6). Always pray and never faint (Luke 18: 1). It is the persevering prayer that is answered. There must be no faltering or wavering (James 1: 6) if the answer would be sure. To dare to believe through discouragements, obstacles and persecutions perhaps for years without seeing the answer is to reap a sure reward. George Muller waited over half a century for the answer to a certain prayer. Let us not "faint" if we must wait a few weeks, months or even years in a trial of our faith (1 Pet. 1: 7).

Pray on God's conditions. "Remember, I beseech thee, the word." Every answer to prayer is conditional. There is always an "if" to the promises (John 14: 13, 14). "In returning and rest shall ye be saved" (Isa. 30: 15). "Return unto me, and I will return unto you" (Mal. 3: 7). God can not come into our way to give us comfort and blessing. We must come his way. There are all his resources at our command. "No good thing will he withhold" (Psa. 84: 11). If we run after the world we must work our way on worldly principles without his aid.

Pray definitely. "Prosper . . . thy servant . . . and grant him mercy in the sight of this man" (v. 11). Nehemiah not only prays generally that God's mercy may be given to his people, but specifically that King Artaxerxes may be disposed to let him go and build up the city of his fathers. God would be "enquired of . . . to do it for" us (Ezek. 36: 37). We get what we ask for when we ask "according to his will" (1 John 5: 14). True prayer is always definite. "In every thing by prayer and supplication," we are to let our "requests be made known" (Phil. 4: 6). God will enter into the details of our lives. A good man's "steps" are "ordered by the Lord" (Psa. 37: 23). We are to commit our "way" (Psa. 37: 5); our "works" (Prov. 16: 3).

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—God hears and answers earnest prayer.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

A PEOPLE IN DISTRESS

NEHEMIAH { Mourning
Praying

ANSWERED PRAYER

A people in distress. Review the story of the return of Ezra and his company from Babylon to the city of Jerusalem, and tell how the Lord protected them during their journey of many hundred miles. Picture to the children the condition of the city with its walls and gates destroyed. A city in the East was not considered a desirable and safe place to live in unless protected by strong walls to keep the enemy out. Give the reasons why the Jews in Jerusalem had strong and numerous enemies. When the first company of exiles returned ninety-one years before this time, and began to rebuild the temple, some of the heathen and half-heathen people about Jerusalem wished to join with the Jews in their work and worship, but the Jews feared the introduction of idolatry and refused to join with them. This made them angry and they became enemies of the Jews. After a time the Jews began to intermarry with other nations, and when this practise was forbidden additional enemies were made.

Nehemiah mourning. Tell the class who Hanani was and the report he brought to Nehemiah from Jerusalem. Show how greatly Nehemiah loved his people and the worship of Jehovah. The children may be able to tell you how Nehemiah showed his sorrow. Jerusalem was not his home for he lived in Shushan and was an honored officer of King Artaxerxes. Perhaps none of his own family were suffering in Jerusalem. His love, however, for his nation and the national religion caused him to weep when he learned of the distress existing among the Jews in Jerusalem.

Nehemiah at prayer. This was not the beginning of his praying. He knew the Lord before this and was his faithful servant. He felt that help must be given in some way to God's people in their distress and he called upon the Lord in prayer. It was a long time that he continued to pray. Tell the story of the importunate widow and the unjust judge (Luke 18: 1-7). Study Nehemiah's prayer to learn what are its principal elements. There is adoration, confession, supplication and a pleading of the promises. Ask the children for a definition of prayer and draw from them the characteristics of true prayer.

Answered prayer. God is faithful to fulfil his word. Two Jews were walking about Jerusalem long ago and looking at its desolation. One wept and the other laughed. The second asked the first why he wept, and he replied that he was pained to see the desolation of the sacred city, and asked the second why he laughed. The reply was that in that desolation he saw that God was always faithful to his word. If he had fulfilled his threatenings, he would also fulfil his promises. Nehemiah's prayer was answered. He was ready to help answer his own prayer.

LESSON X

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Nov. 27.—Rebuilds the wall.—Neh. 4: 1-23. Tu.—Proposal to rebuild.—Neh. 2: 9-20. Wed.—The method of rebuilding.—Neh. 3: 1-32. Th.—The cry of the poor.—Neh. 5: 1-19. Fr.—Be of good courage.—Josh. 1: 1-9. Sat.—Determining to play the man.—2 Sam. 10: 6-14. Su.—God is for us.—Rom. 8: 26-39.

NEHEMIAH REBUILDS THE WALL OF JERUSALEM.—Neh. 4: 1-23. Print 4: 6-18.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 16, 17)

SUPT.—6 So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.

School.—7 But it came to pass, that when San-bal-lat, and To-bi'ah, and the A-ra'bi-ans, and the Am'mon-ites, and the Ash-do-dites, heard that the walls of Je-ru'sa-lem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth,

8 And conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Je-ru'sa-lem, and to hinder it.

9 Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.

10 And Ju'dah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.

11 And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease.

12 And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us they will be upon you.

13 Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

14 And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

15 And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work.

16 And it came to pass from that time forth, that the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers were behind all the house of Ju'dah.

17 They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon.

18 For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me.

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*AMERICAN REVISION

6 So we built the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half the height thereof: for the people had a mind to work.

7 But it came to pass that, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem went forward, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth; 8 and they conspired all of them together to come and fight against Jerusalem, and to cause confusion therein.

9 But we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them. 10 And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.

11 And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come into the midst of them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease. 12 And it came to pass that, when the Jews that dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times from all places, Ye must return unto us.

13 Therefore set I in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in the open places, I set there the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows. 14 And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, who is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

15 And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work. 16 And it came to pass from that time forth, that half of my servants wrought in the work, and half of them held the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the coats of mail; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah. 17 They that builded the wall and they that bare burdens laded themselves; every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other held his weapon; 18 and the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me.

SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. 1 Cor. 16: 13.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—It is our duty to work and watch and pray.

TOPIC.—Demonstrated faith.

OUTLINE.—I. Enemies scoff at the Jews. II. A conspiracy formed. III. Nehemiah's defense. IV. The builders at work.

TIME.—B. C. 444.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

READ.—Neh. 2-5.

INTRODUCTION.—For four months Nehemiah had mourned and prayed for his people in Jerusalem after learning of their sad condition, when King Artaxerxes noticed his sadness and inquired of him the cause. Nehemiah told the king frankly what was weighing upon his mind, and the result was that he was commissioned by the king to go to Jerusalem for the relief of his people. The king aided Nehemiah in every way, furnishing him an escort and giving him letters to the Persian officers in the regions about Judah. It was midsummer

when Nehemiah arrived at Jerusalem. His first work was to investigate conditions in and about the city. He examined the walls by night so that he might not arouse the opposition of the Jews or the suspicions of their enemies. Conditions were found to be even worse than he had supposed, but he was not on that account discouraged, for he believed that he had undertaken a divinely-appointed task. Calling together the chief men of the Jews, he laid before them the plan of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, and their response was, "Let us rise up and build" (ch. 2: 18). Nehemiah had not come to them with a multitude of recruits nor with great treasure, but he had come with the inspiration of one who felt that God had sent him to accomplish a great mission. The work lay heavily upon his heart. He had been living in an atmosphere of earnest prayer for his city and people for seven or eight months, and was full of faith and courage.

COMMENTARY.—I. ENEMIES SCOFF AT THE JEWS (vs. 1-6). 1-5. There are enemies to oppose every good work. Jerusalem had lain in ruins for nearly a century and a half and had been a prey to surrounding nations. When the people around

about saw an effort being made to rebuild the walls they ridiculed the attempt, declaring that the Jews were too feeble for so great an undertaking. The words of Sanballat and Tobiah in vs. 3, 4 express the estimate which they placed upon the Jews' ability to restore Jerusalem and the nation. They flattered themselves into believing that the thing which they did not want done was impossible of accomplishment. As an offset to this derision Nehemiah betook himself again to prayer, committing the entire case to Jehovah, yet used his utmost diligence to carry forward the work already begun. **6. so built we the wall**—The entire wall was apportioned to forty-four different companies and they worked so faithfully that the breaches were all closed in fifty-two days (ch. 6: 15), building "every one over against his own house" (ch. 3: 28). **all the wall was joined unto the half thereof**—The entire wall was built up to one-half its former height. It is estimated that the original height was two hundred feet. **a mind to work**—The enthusiasm of the people explained the rapidity of the work. Nehemiah disclaims any credit to himself.—*Cam. Bible.*

II. A CONSPIRACY FORMED (vs. 7-12). 7. Sanballat—An officer of the Persian government, who had authority in Samaria. He is chiefly noted for his hostility to the Jews. He is called "the Horonites" (ch. 2: 10), probably from Horonaim, a city in Moab. **Tobiah**—He was an Ammonite (ch. 2: 10). The Moabites and the Ammonites were enemies of the Jews, and this fact may account for their bitter hostility to the plan of rebuilding the walls. **Arabs**—Wandering tribes of the desert, probably under the leadership of Geshem (ch. 2: 19). **Ammonites**—A people having their home to the east of the Jordan. **Ashdodites**—The inhabitants of Ashdod, a city of the Philistines, near the Mediterranean Sea. **were very wroth**—They were angry when they heard of the Jews' purpose to rebuild the walls, and their anger increased when they knew that the work was actually being done. They construed the act of the Jews in fortifying the city as an attempt to throw off the Persian yoke, but the real cause of their anger seems to have been a jealousy because of the increasing power and prosperity of the Jews, and, moreover, Jerusalem fortified would no longer be an open field for plunder.

8. conspired.... together—Literally, "breathed together in unison." The hostility of each of these peoples toward the Jews was great enough for the time being to unite them in their opposition to the plan of fortifying Jerusalem. There is no account of their having put their conspiracy into action.

9. we made our prayer unto our God—Nehemiah was a man of prayer; his prayers had thus far brought success in his important undertaking, and he believed the Lord would not fail him at this critical moment. **and set a watch**—The strongest confidence in the protection and favor of God does not preclude the use of all or any of the means of self-preservation and defense which his providence has put in our power.—*Clarke.* Watching and prayer are brought together in their proper relation. On the part of the enemies of the Jews there were ridicule, hatred and conspiracy; but on the part of the Jews, prayer, watching and concentration of purpose to carry out the divinely-appointed plan.

10. Judah said.... we are not able—Nehemiah met opposition, not only from without, but even from his own people, who harbored a spirit of discouragement. There was a great amount of rubbish, which must be removed to find a foundation and to secure building material, and it was a great

height to which stones must be raised to build the walls. This formidable task had discouraged the workers, and their strength was giving way.

11. our adversaries said, etc.—The plan of the enemy was to make a sudden and secret attack upon the Jews with the purpose of utterly routing them and permanently hindering the work of repairing the walls. **12. the Jews which dwelt by them**—The Jews in scattered communities, dwelling among the Samaritans and other enemies. **said unto us ten times.... ye must return (R. V.)**—These scattered Jews felt that their enemies were so hostile that their lives were in danger, therefore they sent "ten times," again and again, for the members of their families in Jerusalem to return to them to protect them. Thus another difficulty presented itself to Nehemiah.

III. NEHEMIAH'S DEFENSE (vs. 13-18). 13. in the lowest parts.... in the open places (R. V.)—Nehemiah placed guards behind the workers in the exposed places where the walls were not yet raised high enough for protection. **after their families**—Probably defending the portion of the wall upon which they were at work.—*Cam. Bible.* Both the defenders and those working upon the walls at any given place belonged to the same family.

14. be not ye afraid of them—It was known that an attack was likely to be made by the Jews' enemies. Nehemiah had done his best in organizing the workers and the defenders, he had prayed earnestly to the Lord, and with confidence he could encourage his people to be brave and strong. **fight for your brethren, etc.**—The strongest incentives were placed before them. "To the Jews the contest must be for their very existence as a people."

15. when our enemies heard—The enemies expected to keep secret the plan of their attack, but it became known to the Jews, and God "brought their counsel to nought." **16. the half of my servants**—Reference is probably made to Nehemiah's band of personal servants. They were divided into two companies, one-half working at rebuilding walls and the other guarding against the enemies. **habergeons**—Coats of mail, protections for the body, made of metal or coarse leather. **rulers were behind**—They took their position behind the workers to direct the work of building, and to direct the defense in case an attack should be made. **17. bare burdens**—The burden-bearers needed but one hand for their work, so they were free to use the other for defense. **18. his sword**—The builders carried their swords in their girdles, where they could be grasped quickly, if needed.

IV. THE BUILDERS AT WORK (vs. 19-23). "Our God shall fight for us" (v. 20) comes fittingly from the lips of the man who had made use of his own skill in pushing forward the work and in guarding the workmen, and had prayed in faith for the success of the undertaking which he was certain was divinely directed. The energy with which the work was advanced appears from the fact that the workmen were busy from daylight until dark, and even at night they were to be ready at a moment's warning to defend themselves and the city.

QUESTIONS.—Who was Nehemiah? Why had he gone to Jerusalem? What did he do first? How did the people receive his plan? How were they opposed? How did Nehemiah meet their opposition? What complaint did the men of Judah make? Why? How did Nehemiah learn the plan of his enemies? How did he arrange to meet their forces? What appeal did Nehemiah make to the people? How did his plan affect his enemies? How did he arrange to complete the work? What was the need of a trumpeter?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. A brief review of the preceding lesson. 2. Intervening events. (1) Nehemiah's sadness observed by the king. (2) The commission and journey to Jerusalem. (3) The survey of the walls by night. (4) The proposition to rebuild the walls set forth by Nehemiah and accepted by his people. 3. Nehemiah was a man with a mission.

II. THEME.—The rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem.

III. OBSTACLES IN THE WAY.—1. The disheartened condition of the Jews. (1) Accustomed to seeing the ruined walls. (2) Dreaded to undertake the gigantic task. (3) Wearied and discouraged even after the work was commenced. (4) Weak in devotion, courage and faith. 2. The ridicule of the enemy. (1) The derision of Sanballat. (2) The sneer of Tobiah. (3) The effect of ridicule. It is a test of courage and character. 3. The conspiracy of the enemies of the Jews. (1) The Moabites. (2) The Ammonites. (3) The Arabians. (4) The Ashdodites. (5) Hatred toward the Jews. (6) Secret plotting. 4. The attitude of the Jews outside the city. (1) In fear of enemies in their own communities. (2) Entreating their friends to return to them from Jerusalem. 5. Typical of the obstacles which beset the Christian's progress.

IV. FACTORS CONDUCTIVE TO SUCCESS.—1. A work having the divine approval. 2. Nehemiah, the leader, had the work at heart and was a man of strength, zeal, courage and faith. 3. A degree of patriotism was possessed by the Jews. 4. The people were capable of being aroused to action by an appeal to their love of their national religious system. 5. The distribution of the work. 6. The encouragement that God would fight for them.

V. THE WORK COMPLETED.—1. Three things that were done: (1) They prayed. (2) They watched. (3) They worked. 2. The material for building the walls. 3. The extent of the walls. They were three or four miles long and perhaps one hundred feet high. 4. The length of time required. 5. What the completed walls meant. 6. What is success in the Christian life?

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Demonstrated faith.

- I. Exhibited in overcoming opposition.
- II. Exhibited in united perseverance.

I. Exhibited in overcoming opposition.

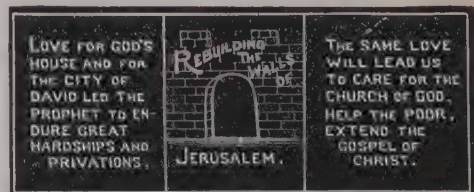
In all aggressive movements there must be aggressive leaders. Nehemiah's vigilance anticipated every difficulty while his prudent measures defeated every obstruction. He was conscious of the powers arrayed against him. He knew the magnitude of his undertaking. He felt the pressure of having his brethren complain. Yet he resorted to prayer in much confidence that God would give him wisdom and skill. He had left his position and the luxuries of court life to face ridicule, slander and conspiracy and was therefore determined to be invincible before his enemies, who made every effort to cause the Jews to feel the power and discomfort of opposition. He knew that in the positive process of achieving good there would be hindrances to meet. He regarded misrepresentations and misconceptions of his work as a part of the pathos of life, and set about to make his life and his work the real answer to all criticism. He recognized his duty and privi-

lege in his appointed work and felt an earnest sympathy in the cause and a longing for the best results. Nehemiah not only embodied, but created the spirit of his age and led it on to victory. Having set his mind to accomplish his work he judiciously employed every means calculated to promote it. His spirit of courage was his best example of resistance. Nehemiah's prayerful, watchful, cheerful, courageous spirit combined with industry made him a bold director in his work. He demonstrated his faith in keeping wide awake to all his duties and performing every task faithfully. There was a reason why his work was surrounded by danger and that was because it was in opposition to the enemies of God's people. Nehemiah could better overcome the attacks of other men than the murmuring of the fearful ones among his own people. A deserter was more demoralizing than a dozen foes, a more pressing peril. Yet that feature of opposition was overcome so that the solicitations of friends made no halt in his divinely directed course.

II. Exhibited in united perseverance. God's work did not stop for enemies, but enemies had to give way when God's work moved on. Nehemiah had not prevailed in prayer for naught. He had not received authority from the king to let his opportunity slip. He had not believed in God's promises to doubt them under test. He had not received assurance from God to disbelieve in the conflict. Nothing but complete victory would satisfy Nehemiah. He arranged everything ready for war and trusted implicitly for peace. Perseverance was a great element in his success. We find no trace of a taskmaster in Nehemiah. The people loved their leader, their work and each other. Nehemiah allowed every man all the comfort possible in such an undertaking, by placing his family near him. He was methodical in his plans for protection and resistance. He resisted by establishing sentinels, by placing weapons in the hands of all, by teaching the people to keep behind the defenses, by pressing all into service, by inspiring his people with confidence in God, by insisting that there be no debating with the enemy, by leading the people to be constant in toil and outlook. He was on the field with his men. His first guard was prayer. "Remember the Lord which is great and terrible." Their prayers showed trust in the Lord, prayers that overcame difficulties, that took the place of everything else, that came from the heart, that ascended to God, that were offered in faith. His second guard was watchfulness. "Set a watch." Praying was not their substitute for the use of means but united with watching became their Gibraltar of strength. Both guards were set together; neither was sufficient alone. With such guards they presented a bold front to the enemy. A mutual cooperation went hand in hand with personal work and responsibility.

T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise



Practical Applications

Watch. 1. **WATCH PRAYERFULLY.** "We made our prayer...and set a watch" (v. 9). Nehemiah was a man of prayer. Twelve times it is mentioned that he prayed. He prayed at Jerusalem (1: 4-11). He prayed for the favor of his king (2: 4), an example of ejaculatory prayer. "He did not lift his face, nor move his lips, nor bend his knee; but straight from his heart to the heart of God went a true, earnest, acceptable prayer. Our desires to God go swifter than any telegraph message and his answers of blessing come back swifter than any lightning flash." He prayed for his enemies (4: 7-9, 14; 6: 14). It is a mark of great grace when men can pray for their enemies, even while they are suffering from their injuries. He prayed for divine compassion (5: 19). Little of appreciation did he receive from men (5: 14-18) and his sore heart cried out: "So did not I, and men forget and neglect me, but I pray thee think upon me my God for good." He prayed for strength (6: 9). He prayed for a defiled priesthood (13: 29). He prayed for a divine remembrance. After he had rebuked rulers, nobles and Jews, very pathetic is his thrice-repeated prayer, "Remember me, O my God" (13: 14, 22, 31).

2. **WATCH PERSISTENTLY.** "Set a watch...day and night" (v. 9). The adversary never stops "seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5: 8), and we should never stop our vigilance. We should watch the way (Neh. 2: 7). "Set a watch against them" (v. 9). Watch against evil. Watch lest you sleep. Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica, "Let us not sleep...but let us watch" (1 Thess. 5: 6).

Work. 1. **WORK EARNESTLY.** "The people had a mind to work" (v. 6). Of "Baruch," one of the workers, whose name signifies, "who is blessed," it is said he "earnestly repaired" (3: 20). "Cursed is he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently" (Jer. 48: 10, margin). They who are "slack" (Prov. 10: 4) or "slothful" instead of "diligent" (Prov. 10: 4; 12: 27) in their work never meet with success. 2. **WORK UNITEDLY.** "All of us" (v. 15). "We labored" (v. 21). Priests, Levites, Nethinims, rulers, women and tradesmen, all lent their service (3: 1-32). The children of God are "one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Rom. 12: 5). We are one. God made us one. We should recognize this, and work in "the unity of the Spirit" (Eph. 4: 3), trusting God to bring us "into the unity of the faith" (Eph. 4: 13, margin). 3. **WORK INDIVIDUALLY.** "Every one unto his work" (v. 15). "To every man his work" (Mark 13: 34). Though there be unity, there must be individual responsibility. It has been said, "To each was given his distinct place and definite labor," some sightly as "the tower," some beautiful as "the gate of the fountain" (3: 15), some lowly as "the valley gate" (3: 13), some honorable as "the great tower," but all equally honorable, for every name is mentioned (3: 1-32). Be willing to do anything or be anything. Be a taper if you can not be a lamp. Speak a word if you can not preach a sermon. A teacher saw a little boy look timidly in at the door one day while the school was in session. She went and persuaded him to join her class. When the boy was ten years old a revival swept through the church and his faithful teacher led him to the altar, where Bishop Wiley afterward said, "She prayed with me until I felt a new light in my heart." The girl could never guess she was bringing a soul to Christ who was to be a mighty preacher and a great leader. 4. **WORK BRAVELY.** Be not deterred by difficulties, nor hindered by obstacles, nor troubled by failures.

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—To succeed in the Christian life we must pray, watch and work.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

Walls { Broken down by enemies
BUILT UP BY { Praying
Watching
Working

Walls broken down. Ask three or four questions to recall the events in the preceding lesson. Tell the story of Nehemiah's sadness in the presence of the king, and the king's inquiry about it. The king was willing to let Nehemiah go to Jerusalem and helped him on his way. In speaking of Nehemiah's going by night to examine the ruined walls, explain that they were destroyed nearly a century and a half before and had never been fully rebuilt. Tell how the walls of a good character and life may be broken down by Satan who is the common enemy of men. Question the children about the acts and desires that break down a good life. Make a list on the board, and explain to the class how Satan's temptations may be resisted and the walls kept good, but a wrong thing done, such as an act of disobedience or a falsehood, will break down the walls.

Praying. Tell the different occasions upon which Nehemiah prayed. It was through prayer that he was enabled to go to Jerusalem, and through prayer he succeeded in interesting the people in the work of building up the walls of the city. Draw on the board a simple outline of three walls joined together at the ends to make three sides of a square. On one of the walls write in large letters the word, "PRAYER." If our hearts are not right, our lives will be likely to be wrong, and the only way for us to get them made right will be for us to commence to pray, confessing our sins and asking our heavenly Father to forgive us.

Watching. Tell the different means which the enemies of the Jews used in an attempt to hinder them from building up the walls. They ridiculed the Jews for making such an attempt. It is hard for children to stand up against ridicule. Then they were going to join together to fight against the Jews to keep them from building. Explain the methods Nehemiah adopted to prevent the enemies from taking them by surprise. Write on another wall of your outline, "WATCHFULNESS." If the Jews had permitted their enemies to attack them when off their guard they would have been defeated without doubt. Satan makes his attacks upon us unexpectedly if he can. We need not only to pray but to watch.

Working. On the third wall write the word, "WORK." Give a vivid word picture of the Jews as they were in their places on and about the walls. Some of them were fully armed and did nothing but watch. Others were carrying loads, using only one hand in their work, and holding a weapon in the other. Still others were using both hands for the work, but had their swords fastened to their girdles. They each had their part in building up the walls. In the distance were the enemies, but we do not know that they came near, for they had heard that the Jews knew of their intended attack.

LESSON XI

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Dec. 4.—Nehemiah and his enemies.—Neh. 6:1-19. Tu.—Jehovah is my salvation.—Psa. 27:1-14. Wed.—The Rock of my strength.—Psa. 62:1-12. Th.—Refuge in Jehovah.—Psa. 118:1-29. Fr.—Be strong in the Lord.—Eph. 6:10-20. Sat.—Watch ye.—1 Cor. 16:1-13. Su.—A good soldier.—2 Tim. 2:1-13.

NEHEMIAH AND HIS ENEMIES.—Neh. 6:1-19. Print 6:1-12.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verse 11)

SUPT.—1 Now it came to pass when San-bal'lat, and To-bi'ah, and Ge'shem the A-ra'bi-an, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;)

School.—2 That San-bal'lat and Ge'shem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of O'no. But they thought to do me mischief.

3 And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?

4 Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner.

5 Then sent San-bal'lat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand;

6 Wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gash'mu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words.

7 And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jeru'sa-lem, saying, There is a king in Ju'dah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together.

8 Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart.

9 For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.

10 Afterward I came unto the house of Shem-ai'ah the son of Del-ai'ah the son of Me-het-a-beel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee.

11 And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.

12 And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for To-bi'ah and San-bal'lat had hired him.

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1 Now it came to pass, when it was reported to Sanballat and Tobiah, and to Geshem the Arabian, and unto the rest of our enemies, that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein (though even unto that time I had not set up the doors in the gates), 2 that Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, (Come, let us meet together in one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief. 3 And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? 4 And they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner. 5 Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand, 6 wherein was written, It is reported among the nations, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel; for which cause thou art building the wall: and thou wouldst be their king, according to these words. 7 And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together. 8 Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart. 9 For they all would have made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. But now, O God, strengthen thou my hands.

10 And I went unto the house of Shemai'ah the son of Delai'ah the son of Mehetabel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee. 11 And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being such as I, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in. 12 And I discerned, and, lo, God had not sent him; but he pronounced this prophecy against me; and Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.

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SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Psa. 27:1.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—A firm faith in God makes one courageous.

TOPIC.—Devotion to duty.

OUTLINE.—I. A plot against Nehemiah. II. A false accusation. III. Enemies within the city.

TIME.—B. C. 444.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

INTRODUCTION.—The difficulties which confronted Nehemiah in his efforts to bring about a prosperous condition of the Jewish people in Jerusalem were not all occasioned by the enemies of the nation. Abuses had sprung up among the Jews themselves, an account of which is given in the chapter preceding the lesson. Some of the people were unable to provide food for themselves without mortgaging their possessions. Their fellow Jews who had money were ready to take the land and the vineyards of their less prosperous brethren and provide them with food. This was not all. As the needs continued, Jewish families sold their sons and daughters into bondage in order to secure pro-

visions. When complaints regarding this matter came to Nehemiah he was deeply affected and acted promptly. He succeeded in bringing about a complete reformation in this respect, and those who had lost their lands and vineyards received them back. Nehemiah proved himself a man of high ideas of justice and broad sympathies, as well as a man of action. He felt while still at Shushan the needs of his people in Jerusalem and made his way thither for their relief. Once upon the ground, he realized more clearly the distress of the nation, and went to work energetically to rebuild the walls and to correct existing abuses, giving liberally of his own provisions for the support of the people. He accomplished a great work in checking the oppression of the poor by the rich.

COMMENTARY.—I. A PLOT AGAINST NEHEMIAH (vs. 1-4). 1. it came to pass—These events belong to the period of the rebuilding of the walls, particularly to the time when the work was nearly completed. Sanballat—A leading officer among the Samaritans. His authority was received from the Persian government. He was bitter in his opposition to the Jews in their efforts to build up

the Jewish nation. **Tobiah**—An Ammonite, who was a man of influence, and who was associated with Sanballat in his hostility to the Jews. **Geshem**—A bitter enemy of Nehemiah and his people. He is mentioned in verse 6 under the name Gashmu. **had not set up the doors**—It is probable that the work of putting the doors in place was left until the walls were completed, the openings in the walls being closed temporarily with some sort of barricade. In this way there would be no delay in building the walls, and the city would the sooner be protected. **2. let us meet together**—Nehemiah and his fellow Jews had been subjected to ridicule by their enemies (ch. 4: 2, 3), they had been threatened (ch. 4: 11), and now an effort was being made through deception to bring Nehemiah into the power of his enemies to do him injury. The pretense of Sanballat was that he wished to hold a consultation with Nehemiah upon matters of interest to both. **in the plain of Ono**—A region about thirty miles northeast of Jerusalem. "An interview in the plain of Ono would have necessitated Nehemiah's absence from Jerusalem during three or four days. The object of his enemies was doubtless to seize or to assassinate him at a distance from Jerusalem."—*Ryle*. **thought to do me mischief**—The enemies of the Jews recognized the fact that Nehemiah was the powerful leader among the Jews and a great victory would be won if they could only destroy him. **3. I am doing a great work... I cannot come down**—Nehemiah realized the largeness of the task upon which he had entered and felt that his duty was in Jerusalem, rather than "in the plain of Ono." **why should the work cease**—The work of rebuilding the walls was too great and too important to be allowed to stop, and it certainly would have been carried on with less vigor in the absence of Nehemiah, if it had not ceased entirely. Nehemiah was wise enough to know that Sanballat was planning his destruction, but he was too wise to let Sanballat know that he knew it. **4. yet—"And,"—R. V. four times**—This indicated Sanballat's eagerness to gain his point. **answered them after the same manner**—Instead of weakening, Nehemiah maintained his same decision of purpose and showed himself to be a true man.

II. A FALSE ACCUSATION (vs. 5-9). 5. an open letter—It was customary to fold a letter and seal it, when sending it to another or, if special respect was to be shown to the person addressed, the letter was enclosed in a silken bag. To send an open letter to another was to show great disrespect to him.

6. it is reported—Nehemiah had braved ridicule, had disregarded threats, had withstood blandishments, and now he was to be the victim of misrepresentation. In our day almost anything can be "reported," and it was true also in Sanballat's time, **among the heathen**—"Among the nations."—*R. V.* and **Gashmu saith it**—Gashmu was a bitter enemy of Nehemiah. He was not only bitter, but conscienceless. His train of bearers of unfounded reports has been numerous since his day, and some still survive. **think to rebel**—This malicious falsehood was designed to terrify Nehemiah, and to turn the Jews against him on the ground that he desired to become king. **mayest be their king**—Nehemiah had no such purpose. He held the office of governor, conferred by the Persian government, and was faithful in the discharge of the office and was satisfied. **according to these words**—According to the report given above. **7. to preach of thee**—There is no doubt that there were prophets in Jerusalem who spoke highly of Nehemiah, but the report contained in the open letter was without foundation. "Sanballat

suggests, (1) that Nehemiah had bribed prophets to support him, and (2) that their support was of a treasonable nature."—*Cam. Bible*. **take counsel**—Sanballat appeared greatly interested in Nehemiah's welfare, and he had made a strong appeal to him. **8. thou feignest them**—Nehemiah was bold to declare, not only that the reports were untrue, but also that they had their origin in the heart of Sanballat. **9. for they all would have made us afraid (R. V.)**—It was the purpose of the enemies of the Jews to frighten them, so that they would not be able to build the walls of Jerusalem. **strengthen my hands**—In view of all the opposition arrayed against him, Nehemiah made his prayer to God for strength. The words, "O God," are not in the Hebrew text and the marginal reading of the Revised Version is, "I will strengthen my hands."

III. ENEMIES WITHIN THE CITY (vs. 10-19). 10. Shemaiah—He was professedly a prophet of the Lord. **who was shut up**—He feigned to be in fear of Sanballat and the other enemies, and seems to have imprisoned himself in his own house to show how much he was afraid.—*Whedon*. **within the temple**—Shemaiah proposed that he and Nehemiah should go into the sacred place where only priests might enter, that there they might find safety. **come to slay thee**—Shemaiah sought to make Nehemiah afraid by telling him this falsehood. Had Nehemiah yielded to the request of Shemaiah, thus showing cowardice, he would have lost his influence with the Jews and great discouragement and weakness would have come to them. Satan is not particular as to the methods employed in gaining his ends. He is satisfied to take advantage of circumstances or of human weaknesses to urge his cause. Sanballat's attack upon Nehemiah well illustrates Satan's attack upon God's people.

11. should such a man as I flee—Nehemiah was the governor and leader of his people, a man with a clear head and strong heart, to whom was committed a great work. It would have been utterly inconsistent with his nature to try to save himself and let his people be swallowed up by their enemies. There was no cowardice in Nehemiah to which Sanballat or Shemaiah could appeal. **I will not go in**—His reply was prompt and positive. Nehemiah was a stalwart man of God. He saw clearly the path of duty. He had no occasion to argue the case with Shemaiah. Although Shemaiah came to him under the guise of friendship, Nehemiah discerned that his advice was wrong.

12. God had not sent him—He was a false prophet. **pronounced this prophecy against me**—Instead of giving the prophecy for the good of Nehemiah, he had sought to destroy him by it. **had hired him**—He was a hireling prophet. Professing to be the prophet of the Lord, he had prostituted the office to the basest ends. **13-19. Shemaiah was not alone in this plot**. Other prophets were implicated. In spite of all opposition the walls were completed in the incredibly short space of fifty-two days. The completion of the work caused the enemies to be downcast, and they even came to understand that this work was of God.

QUESTIONS.—What report did Sanballat and other enemies of the Jews hear? What invitation did Sanballat and Tobiah send to Nehemiah? What was their purpose? What answer did Nehemiah make? How many times was the invitation sent? What was the significance of sending an open letter? What were the two principal charges contained in the letter? What was Nehemiah's reply to the letter? What effort did Shemaiah make? What did Nehemiah learn about Shemaiah?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. The first notice we have of Nehemiah. 2. His qualities as shown in his prayer for his people. 3. The difficulties encountered in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. 4. The speedy completion of the walls accounted for. 5. Evils existing among the Jews in Jerusalem growing out of greed. 6. Nehemiah's success in remedying those evils. 7. The events of to-day's lesson occurred during the rebuilding of the walls.

II. THEME.—Success in the face of great opposition.

III. INVITATIONS DECLINED.—1. The occasion of the invitation. 2. The senders of the invitation. 3. The character of the invitation. 4. The purpose in sending the invitation. 5. The location of the proposed place of meeting. 6. The invitation repeated. 7. Nehemiah's reply. 8. He who is serving God is doing a great work. 9. He is on a high plane of life. 10. What it means to go down to the enemy. 11. Service for God ceases when one goes down to parley with the enemy. 12. The wisdom of Nehemiah's prompt and positive refusal.

IV. MISREPRESENTATION LAID BARE.—1. The significance of the open letter. 2. The contents of the letter. 3. The character of Gashmu and his successors. 4. The two false charges. (1) Of rebellion. (2) Of treason. 5. Nehemiah's manly denial. 6. Sanballat's motive in sending the letter. 7. The effect of the letter. 8. Nehemiah's faith and determination.

V. FALSE PROPHECY EXPOSED.—1. The office and character of Shemaiah. 2. His purpose in shutting himself up. 3. His appeal to Nehemiah. 4. Safety in the sacred precincts of the temple refused. 5. Nehemiah's manhood and devotion to God and his people scorned the proposition. 6. Shemaiah a bribed prophet.

VI. THE WALLS COMPLETED.—1. Nehemiah had a mission, was tested, was true, was successful. 2. The time occupied. 3. The effect upon the enemies. 4. The honor accorded to God.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Devotion to duty.

I. Brought greater tests upon Nehemiah.

II. Brought defeat to the enemies of Judah.

I. Brought greater tests upon Nehemiah.

We have in this lesson the persistency of opposition in various forms from the enemies of Nehemiah and the Jews, and the persistency of endeavor by Nehemiah in the completion of the wall around Jerusalem. Nehemiah was a model man of business, a model of earnestness, unselfishness, faithfulness and piety—a good man in a great work. He had a fixed design and pursued a steady course. No specious pretense could call him from his work. He lost no time in rebuilding the ruined wall. He sought to keep up the quickened and responsive zeal of the people. His patriotism was strong because it was based upon true piety. He kept at prayer. He kept at work amid all the inducements to do otherwise. He was careful to ascertain facts, to detect plots, to weigh evidence, to examine character and to balance circumstances that he might arrive at the truth. Faith and prayer and work had achieved great things in Jerusalem. To the enemies of God's people it was a time of vexation and dismay. In spite of their vaunting words the good work had advanced and unless they could quickly crush it they plainly saw that all would be lost for them. They had attempted mockery.

They had attempted force all to no profit. They next resolved upon strategy, but Nehemiah was still fortified by a good conscience and possessed his soul in patience while they beset him with their wiles and accusations. "He looked on the field of danger with the eye of an eagle and walked over it with the heart of a lion." His enemies first sought to draw him into the country under pretense of counsel. Failing in their endeavors to drive Nehemiah from his work they further attempted to ascribe evil motives to his work. Wicked reports were propagated. They tried to intimidate him and urged him to seek refuge in the temple. Nehemiah had to hear the gossip but refused to flee from it or give it attention. He not only denied that such things were true, but said they were reported without authority. He was better known at court than to be thus suspected. He would not omit duty merely for fear his motives should be misconstrued, but kept a good conscience and trusted God to protect his good name. Every effort to draw him away from duty only quickened him to greater diligence.

II. Brought defeat to the enemies of Judah. It was the cessation of the work that Nehemiah's enemies aimed at. They would get him to go anywhere only so he left his work. They tried four times to prevent the completion of Nehemiah's work. His integrity and innocence preserved him, while his enemies suffered the humiliation of those who boast of their power and then feel themselves completely defeated by the people whose might they had despised. It was a cruel thrust at Nehemiah to accuse him of seeking position for himself and not the honor of God, and his own exaltation more than the prosperity of Zion. Nehemiah commended the whole case to the direction of God. He was not overcome by the treachery, ingratitude or perverseness of those around him. Prayer was Nehemiah's common resource and God his constant helper. Nehemiah considered his relation to God, his obligation to him, his expectation from him and the interest which God himself had in the whole plan before him. As he was doing God's work under special guidance he expected to be kept in safety without neglecting his work to save his life. False brethren were the severest trial to Nehemiah. The rage of his persecutors though terrible was not as dangerous as their professed friendship and the false advice of his countrymen. Having pure motives and a clean heart enabled Nehemiah to act and speak in a way to bring him complete triumph over all artifice, intimidation, ridicule and deceit from his enemies. They despaired of ever doing the Jews the mischief they had designed against them. This was the hour of Israel's triumph and the humiliation of her enemies. Nehemiah attained the full victory of finishing the wall around Jerusalem. Victory gained under such difficulties served to establish confidence and faith among the people who had been well-nigh defeated. T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

<p>NEHEMIAH'S ENEMIES CAME TO HIM AS FRIENDS.</p> <p>IT TAKES WISDOM TO DETECT THE FALSE.</p> <p>WATCH.</p>	<p>ENEMIES BY THE WAY</p> <p>STUMBLING BLOCKS</p> <p>HINDRANCES.</p>	<p>SATAN APPROACHES US AS AN ANGEL OF LIGHT.</p> <p>OUR WORK IS GREAT. WHY SHOULD IT CEASE?</p>
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Practical Applications

"Let us meet together in the plain of Ono" (v. 2). There was one great reason why Sanballat desired to have Nehemiah meet him in the plain, and that was to prevent the building of the walls of Jerusalem, and he was not particular how that purpose was accomplished. He saw that Nehemiah was making a success of his undertaking, and he was ready to take the builder's life if necessary to stop the work. The enemy of souls lures many a Christian from his work for a parley in the plain of worldliness and sin, and he attempts to lure many with whom he fails as he did with Nehemiah. More than one minister of the gospel has been lured from his sacred calling and been lost to the cause of God from consenting to a conference with Satan "in the plain" on the subject of the pastor's salary. Many a layman has been drawn from the service of God as the result of a conference with the enemy of his soul upon the subject of money-making. Satan has an endless variety of subjects for discussion with any who will accept his invitation to a parley "in the plain." Some of these subjects are worldly pleasures, worldly companionships, worldly societies, adornment, attendance at the church services, carefulness in conversation, doubts as to the authority of the word of God. If he can persuade one to go with him for consultation "in the plain," there is a good prospect of his being drawn permanently from his work. There is danger in stopping one's work to listen to Satan's invitation.

"I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down" (v. 3). There were several reasons why Nehemiah declined Sanballat's invitation: 1. The importance of the work in which he was engaged. The very life of the Jewish nation depended upon the successful completion of the work in hand. The Lord had expressly laid this duty upon Nehemiah's heart, and had given him the disposition and ability to do it. The work which God has assigned to us, no matter in what sphere of life it lies, is important. Our spiritual life depends upon our faithful performance of it, and the welfare of others is jeopardized by our abandoning it. We should realize that God's service is the most important work that can engage our attention. 2. "The plain of Ono" was far from his field of labor. He could not counsel with Sanballat and at the same time push forward the work of rebuilding the walls. His work at Jerusalem must not cease. Satan's council-room is so far from the Christian's workroom that he can not be in both at the same time. 3. It would be a coming "down" for Nehemiah to pass from his work at Jerusalem to "the plain of Ono." It is well to have regard for spiritual levels. The Christian lives and labors on a plain so high that he can not go into counsel with Satan without going "down." 4. For Nehemiah to go down to "the plain of Ono" would doubtless have meant no return for him to Jerusalem, for Sanballat thought to do him mischief (v. 2). Many a person has gone "down" for a conference and never returned, for he went down to his destruction. Nehemiah's reply to Sanballat rings through the ages as an expression of faithful devotion to God and his work.

"Should such a man as I flee?" (v. 11). Great men in the Christian world have been offered protection if they would deny the truth that made them free. They esteemed God's truth and God's work too highly to forsake them for personal safety. Nehemiah was not long in denouncing the unholy suggestion of the lying prophet. Our safety lies in promptly resisting the devil.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—Faith in God is a cure for fear.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

An artful invitation

A lying report

A false prophet

The review. Ask one of the children to tell you how the workmen were able to build the walls of Jerusalem when the enemies were anxious to keep them from it. Recall the remarks that the enemies of the Jews made about the weakness of the walls the Jews were building. Dwell upon the need there is to be watchful, prayerful and industrious.

The story of an invitation. Draw an outline map of Palestine, showing the city of Jerusalem and the Mediterranean off at the west, and the Jordan River and the Dead Sea to the east. At a point northeast of Jerusalem locate the plain of Ono not far from the Mediterranean. It is about thirty miles from Jerusalem. Tell the story of Sanballat sending an invitation to Nehemiah to meet him in "the plain of Ono." It was not because he loved Nehemiah and desired to visit with him, but he wanted to draw him away from his work so that the work of building the walls of Jerusalem would cease. Tell about the great work in which we are, or ought to be, engaged. Tell how Satan, the enemy, would like to call us away from our duty of serving the Lord. Make much of Nehemiah's noble reply. Write on the board the words, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down." Sanballat meant to destroy Nehemiah. Note that the invitation was sent four times and as many times declined. Nehemiah could not be coaxed to do wrong.

The story of an open letter. Have a letter neatly folded and an unsealed envelope. Place the letter in the envelope and seal it. That is the ordinary way of sending a letter. Have another letter written on a sheet of paper. Leave the sheet unfolded and let that represent the letter which Sanballat sent to Nehemiah. It was open so that any one who wished could read it. In the East it was insulting to a person to send him an open letter. Describe the contents of the letter and show how base it was for Sanballat to tell such lies about the godly man, Nehemiah. Show the wicked purpose of Sanballat in sending the letter. Nehemiah met it in an honorable way and sent a noble reply. It was a hard thing to meet, but Nehemiah was brave and trusted in God.

The story of a false prophet. Read the story of Shemaiah and his prophecy slowly to the class, asking them to pay close attention to it. When you have finished ask them a series of questions to bring out the facts stated. Explain why Shemaiah proposed to Nehemiah to hide in the sacred place. Was Nehemiah a coward? Who admires a coward? It was brave in Nehemiah to refuse. He was too noble to do a cowardly act, and too wise to be deceived into wrong-doing. There are those who are not moved by threats of violence, but who yield to the pleadings of their friends and take a course which they know to be evil.

LESSON XII

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Dec. 11.—Ezra teaches the law.—Neh. 8:1-18. Tu.—Confession and covenant.—Neh. 9:1-38. Wed.—The law of the Lord.—Psa. 19:1-14. Th.—Thy word is truth.—Psa. 119:153-160. Fr.—Thy word is a lamp.—Psa. 119:97-112. Sat.—Thy word in my heart.—Psa. 119:9-24. Su.—Word of Christ.—Col. 3:5-17.

EZRA TEACHES THE LAW.—Neh. 8:1-18. Print 8:1-12.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 2, 3)

SUPT.—1 And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ez'ra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Mo'ses, which the Lord had commanded to Is'ra-el.

School.—2 And Ez'ra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.

3 And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.

4 And Ez'ra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mat-tith'ah, and She'ma, and A-na'i'ah, and U-ri'jah, and Hil-ki'ah, and Ma-a-sei'ah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pe-da'i'ah, and Mi'sha-el, and Mal-chi'ah, and Hash'um, and Hash-ba-da'na, Zech-a-ri'ah, and Me-shu'l'am.

5 And Ez'ra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up:

6 And Ez'ra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, A'men, A'men, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

7 Also Jesh'u-a, and Ba'ni, and Sher-e-bi'ah, Ja'min, Ak'kub, Shab-be-thai, Ho-di'jah, Ma-a-sei'ah, Ke-li'ta, Az-a-ri'ah, Jo'za-bad, Ha'nan, Pe-la'i'ah, and the Le'vites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place.

8 So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

9 And Ne-hem-i'ah, which is the Tir'sha-tha, and Ez'ra the priest the scribe, and the Le'vites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.

10 Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength.

11 So the Le'vites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved.

12 And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

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1 And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the broad place that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which Jehovah had commanded to Israel. 2 And Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, both men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. 3 And he read therein before the broad place that was before the water gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women, and of those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. 4 And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Ananiah, and Uriah, and Hilkiah, and Maseelah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchijah, and Hashum, and Hashbadanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam. 5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people (for he was above all the people); and when he opened it, all the people stood up. 6 And Ezra blessed Jehovah, the great God; and all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with the lifting up of their hands; and they bowed their heads, and worshipped Jehovah with their faces to the ground. 7 Also Joshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maseelah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabab, Hanan, Pelsiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. 8 And they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, so that they understood the reading.

9 And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Le'vites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto Jehovah your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. 10 Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye grieved; for the joy of Jehovah is your strength. 11 So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved. 12 And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. Psa. 19: 7.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—The word of God brings light and gladness to his people.

TOPIC.—Primitive piety.

OUTLINE.—I. God's word asked for and read. II. The effects of hearing God's word. III. The feast of Tabernacles observed.

TIME.—B. C. 444.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

INTRODUCTION.—These events follow closely those of the last lesson. Upon the completion of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem the people rested a week before the reading of the law by Ezra. In ch. 7 is given the register of those who returned from the Babylonish

captivity, and this is followed by an account of gifts made by Nehemiah and others for the work of the Lord. The time of this lesson was the first day of the seventh month, Tisri. In this month three great festivals were held: 1. The feast of Trumpets, occurring in the new civil year. 2. The great day of Atonement, the tenth of the month. 3. The feast of Tabernacles, from the fifteenth to the twenty-second—the Jewish Thanksgiving. In addition to these, Nehemiah held another solemn meeting for the renewal of the covenant. This month was largely given up to religious meetings, chiefly for the study of God's word. In subsequent chapters Nehemiah describes the dedication of the walls of Jerusalem, and tells of the reforms that were accomplished in the social and religious life of the nation.

COMMENTARY.—I. GOD'S WORD ASKED FOR AND READ (vs. 1-8). 1. the people gath-

ered—The completion of the walls marked an epoch in the life of the nation. The work had engaged the attention of all, and the people had realized the unifying effect of this common purpose. They also were constrained to acknowledge that God had been graciously favoring them. **before the water gate**—The place of meeting was southeast of the temple before the water-gate, through which water was carried for use in the temple. **Ezra the scribe**—Ezra had returned to Jerusalem from the land of captivity thirteen years before this time, but in the record of the events of twelve years his name was not mentioned. The general opinion is that he returned to Babylon, where he remained for several years, possibly engaged in copying the law. **bring the book of the law**—It seems probable that Ezra's return prompted the people's request to have the law read to them. **which the Lord had commanded**—It was the word of Jehovah.

2. Ezra the priest—Ezra was of the priestly tribe, being a direct descendant of Aaron (Ezra 7:1-5). **brought the law before the congregation**—The assembly included men, women and children, who could hear the law intelligently. The later rabbinical teaching was to the effect that women should be excluded from hearing the law, but that teaching was opposed to the word of God. **first day of the seventh month**—The month Tisri was the seventh month of the ecclesiastical year and the first month of the civil year, and the first day was a great day among the Jews. The month Tisri corresponds to the latter part of our September and the former part of our October. **3. from the morning until mid-day**—The reading continued from early in the morning until noon. It is probable that the others read in turn, thus relieving Ezra. **were attentive unto the book**—Though there is no word in the Hebrew for "attentive," yet the meaning is quite correctly given: "The ears of all the people were to the book"—fixed on that, and on nothing else.—*Pulpit Com.* The people were eager to know what the Lord had said. The religious life of the nation was being revived.

4. pulpit of wood—This was a platform raised sufficiently high to afford all in the congregation an opportunity to see the reader standing thereon. It was broad enough to accommodate Ezra and the persons mentioned in this verse. **and beside him stood Mattithiah, etc.**—Nothing is known of most of these persons except their names. They were probably prominent priests, perhaps chiefs of the courses of priests who ministered in the temple service. They gave dignity to the service, and probably aided Ezra in the reading of the law.—*Peloubet.*

5. opened the book—Books in those days were long strips of parchment rolled at either end upon sticks, and to open a book meant to unroll the scroll. **all the people stood up**—They had evidently been sitting while waiting for the reading to begin, and rose to their feet out of respect for the word of God. It is likely that they sat down after the exercises mentioned in the next verse, and remained sitting while Ezra read the book of the law.

6. blessed the Lord—Gave thanks. **amen**—The people's response to Ezra's words of thanksgiving and praise. The word means, "So let it be." **lifting up their hands**—By this act they showed that they accepted the words read as the law of God and would be obedient to it. Lifting up the hands in worship is referred to in the scriptures (Psa. 63:4; 1 Tim. 2:8). **bowed their heads**... **with their faces to the ground**—They assumed an attitude of reverent humility. They were impressed with the goodness and mercy of God and the sacredness of

his word. **7. Jeshua, etc.**—The names here recorded are those of Levites, who assisted in explaining the words of the law to the people. **8. read**... **distinctly**—Those who read were careful to speak clearly so that the great assembly could catch every word. The people were eager to hear and it was important they should. **gave the sense**—The Jews had been long in captivity and were unfamiliar with the law, hence explanations were needed that they might grasp the meaning of the words read. Some think that they had to a considerable extent lost the knowledge of the pure Hebrew language through their contact with their captors in Babylon. **and caused them to understand**—"So that they understood."—*R. V.*

II. THE EFFECTS OF HEARING GOD'S WORD (vs. 9-12). **9. Tirshatha**—This was a title given to Nehemiah representing his office as provincial governor. **this day is holy unto the Lord**—It was the new moon and as such was considered sacred, and it was also a notable day, because of the reading of the law. **mourn not**—The people wept upon hearing the law because it showed them how they had been sinning against God and his commandments. Their weeping was an indication of genuine penitence. It seems clear that they were ignorant as to the demands of the law. "This is a holy day to God; a day appointed for general rejoicing in him who has turned our captivity, restored us to his law, and again established among us his ordinances."—*Clarke.* **10. eat the fat, and drink the sweet**—A proverbial expression, meaning that the occasion was not one of fasting and grief.—*Ryle.* **send portions**—In the midst of their rejoicing they were to remember the poor by supplying them with that which would nourish and cheer them, thus adding to their own joy. **the joy of the Lord is your strength**—Religious joy, properly tempered by continual dependence on the help of God, meekness of mind and self-denial, is a powerful means of strengthening the soul. In such a state every duty is practicable and delightful. In such a frame of mind no man ever fell.—*Clarke.* **11. stilled all the people**—Restrained from mourning. **neither be ye grieved**—Sorrowful. **12. because they had understood**—The people sorrowed because they had not kept the law; they now rejoiced because they were able to understand it.—*Cam. Bible.* It is a calamity to be deprived of the word of God. See Hos. 4:6.

III. THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES OBSERVED (vs. 13-18). On the second day the reading and explaining the law was continued with "the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites" as hearers. When it was read and understood that the feast of Tabernacles should be observed on the fifteenth of the month, preparations were at once commenced for its observance. This feast was to commemorate the journey of the children of Israel from Egypt to Canaan, hence they were to dwell in booths constructed of branches of trees during the eight days, from the fifteenth to the twenty-second of the month. The study of the law continued daily during the feast.

QUESTIONS.—For what purpose did the people assemble before the water-gate at Jerusalem? What is meant by the law of God? Who was the reader and how many assistants did he have? What classes of people listened to the reading of the law? In what manner was it read? What effect did the reading of the law have upon the hearers? How long did the study of God's word continue? What feast was observed? What event did the feast commemorate? What was the religious condition of the Jews at this time?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. Connect this lesson with the preceding one. (1) Compare the persons connected with the two lessons. (2) Note the time intervening. 2. The effect upon the Jews of their work in rebuilding the walls. 3. The various religious exercises during the seventh month. (1) The law read. (2) The feast of Tabernacles. (3) The meeting for confession and renewing the covenant with God. (4) The dedication of the walls.

II. THEME.—The study of God's word.

III. THE NEED FOR ITS STUDY.—1. The ignorance of God's law on the part of Israel. 2. Reasons for this ignorance. 3. The results of this ignorance. 4. The obligation of the Jews to know God's law. See Deut. 6:7; 31:9-13. 5. The Jews needed to know God's law in order to be what God designed they should be. 6. The need to-day of the study of the Bible. 7. The ignorance of God's word even among professed Christians, to say nothing of those who are outside the churches.

IV. THE MANNER OF ITS STUDY.—1. The word was within reach. (1) Ezra was an able and faithful scribe. (2) He was prepared to read and explain the law. (3) The scarcity of copies of the word of God then. (4) The abundance of copies of the Bible now. 2. The people desired to know God's word. 3. The assembly. (1) Its composition. (2) The place. (3) The length of time. 4. The distinctness of the reading. 5. The adequacy of the explanations. 6. Facilities now for the study of the Bible. 7. The Sunday-school as an agency for teaching the word.

V. THE EFFECTS OF ITS STUDY.—1. The knowledge of God's word brought repentance. 2. It brought the renewal of a covenant. 3. It revealed duty. 4. It produced a desire to know the law of God more fully. 5. It produced reforms in Jerusalem. 6. The study of God's word now brings conviction. 7. The reception of God's word brings spiritual advancement.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Primitive piety.

- I. Revived by the study of God's law.
- II. Promoted by the practise of charities.

I. Revived by the study of God's law. God has ever blessed his own word as the chosen instrument of all revival and progress in his church. The ancient covenant of God had almost dropped out of memory among the returned Jews. Upon hearing it their sins and faithlessness of the past bowed the people in grief. There were no listless or indifferent ones among them. It was a full, earnest, attentive, devout assembly. God gave Ezra ability and authority and the people gave him opportunity and invitation. Ezra and Nehemiah differed much from each other in age, office, rank and character, but they were one in heart and joined in complete harmony of action for the revival of their beloved Zion. Ezra had faithfully insisted upon reforms. Nehemiah had diligently worked to rebuild the city wall. And now with such security against the outside world their duty was to reach the correct standard of obedient, devout lives. Expounding the scriptures brought the reading and preaching together in such a way as to make the reading more intelligible and the preaching more convincing. A proper appreciation of God's word was necessary to their spiritual success. The object of God's word is to reveal himself and the duties he

sets before men. The revival spirit under Ezra's teaching took the correct order. Godly sorrow worketh repentance. Seeing all God had promised and what he had wrought, compared with what they had done to prove their love and devotion, brought tears of sincere repentance. The Lord had brought them back from a miserable and degrading captivity, from under the yoke of Babylon, protected and delivered them in a marvelous manner, restored them in Zion, softened the king's heart toward them so that they were securing a settlement in their own land. If their repentance was sincere there was occasion for rejoicing, for joy is the voice of order and peace in the soul. True joy can only begin when the self-life has been surrendered. The better they understood the word of God the more comfort they saw in it. Nehemiah wisely directed the people in their spiritual progress. He had no intention of making light of their sorrow for sin, nor to represent it as aught else than a necessary ingredient in the composition of genuine repentance. He would lead them to see that sorrow for sin must not hinder joy in God, but rather lead to it and prepare them for it.

II. Promoted by the practise of charities. The sacred scriptures were useful to them in proportion as they were helped to worship God more reverently, intelligently and spiritually, and this would be seen in the development of practical self-forgetting generosity. Illustrating what God was for them and to them, they would be for others and do for others, making practical use of piety. Joy in the Lord was their strength, positive, actual power for service, strength that led to practical results, making all work for the good of man as work for the Lord. For their own sakes, for the sake of others and for his own great name's sake the Lord would have his people rejoice. His word promises joy. His Spirit inspires it. Service for him produces it. Joy is like oil to the wheels of obedience. Pure spiritual joy refreshes and quickens the whole nature. It helps to fortify the soul against the assaults of the enemy, and was the great need of the people to whom Ezra spoke. They needed strength for endurance, for service and against temptation. They needed an inward testimony of God's approval upon their efforts, enabling them to do what was well pleasing and acceptable in his sight. "The joy of the Lord is your strength" are words which sound like a promise uttered in the full knowledge of the gospel rather than under the law, for such joy is preeminently and peculiarly the joy of which the Holy Spirit is the author. "The joy of the Lord is that sensation of gladness and happiness which the Holy Spirit conveys to the soul and maintains in the soul through the knowledge of God in his true character toward us." The law, prophecies and Psalms declare that God's people are a happy people. God has made provision, not only for the maintenance, but for the joy of his people. T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF THE LAW HAD BEEN LIMITED.	THE LAW OF THE LORD IS PERFECT	THE WORD OF GOD IS IN ALL OUR HOMES.
THEY WERE GLAD TO LEARN.		OUR ZEAL SHOULD EQUAL THEIRS.
HAD FAITHFUL TEACHERS.		WE HAVE ABLE TEACHERS.

Practical Applications

Punctuality. "All the people gathered... as one man" (v. 1). They came "from the light" (v. 3, marg.). They met early in the morning. It was a time of intense interest. They met for the first time in this "holy convocation" commanded by Moses for the "first day of the seventh month" (v. 2; Lev. 23:24). "It was a great national thanksgiving service of real heart interest." This is the secret of punctuality. A child anticipating a great pleasure is anxious to be off, sometimes hours before the appointed time. If there is that in our Sunday services to inspire the deep heart of love for them there will be no tardiness.

Eagerness to learn. "They spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel" (v. 1). The people who formerly "withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear" (Neh. 9:29) were now ready to know God's requirements and do them. A native in India came fifty miles in a jolting cart, drawn by oxen, to the missionary, to inquire about things he could not understand in the book.

Attention. "The ears of all the people were attentive" (v. 3). The very opening of the book produced quiet reverence. When Jesus read from the "prophet Esaias... the eyes of all of them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him" (Luke 4:17-20). Attention is the first requisite to obtaining good from teaching. It may be secured by the teacher through prayerful preparation, distinct utterance (v. 8) and speaking in the power of God. On the part of the hearers, by an intense purpose and desire to obtain spiritual food, by self-control over the thoughts, over the eyes, by a remembrance that God is the real teacher, and by earnest, constant prayer that the word may be a blessing.

Devotion. "Ezra opened the book... and when he opened it, all the people stood up" (v. 5). "The Bible is our most tangible reminder of the Holy One." Standing in the presence of a superior is an attitude of respect, a mark of courtesy. When God's word was brought out in the sight of the people they rose as an act of reverence due to it and with one impulse confessed that God, the great God, the mighty God of Israel, was speaking. No one can even get a faint conception of the living God back of his word and in it without instinctively taking an attitude of devotion.

Responsiveness. "All the people answered, Amen, Amen" (v. 6). As was commanded by the law (Deut. 27:15; Num. 5:22). Amen is one of the names of Jesus. It means "faithful and true" (Rev. 3:14). "So be it" (Jer. 11:5, marg.). "The Lord do so" (Jer. 28:6). The promises in Christ are yea and amen (2 Cor. 1:20); true and faithful, certain to be kept. The redeemed, living ones shout "amen" in glory (Rev. 5:14). Can any shout it there who have not learned it here?

Intelligent reading. "Caused the people to understand the law... read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading" (vs. 7, 8). God's word shall not return to him void (Isa. 55:11), and when read in the power of his Spirit will search the heart, leaving no sin unrevealed. His truth is simple and convincing. Benjamin Franklin once read the third chapter of Habakkuk to a company of infidels. They were deeply impressed by it and acknowledged it the best poem they had ever heard. A celebrated man, once called upon to offer prayer, repeated the Lord's Prayer so impressively that he and his hearers were melted to tears. A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—There is great blessing in knowing and obeying God's word.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

Ezra the Scribe

God's Word { Desired
Heard
Obeyed

Ezra the scribe. Note the fact that in the last three lessons the study has been about Nehemiah. Describe his trials in the last lesson. Refer back to the first reference we have to Ezra. Trace the great work he did in leading a company of captives from the land of their captivity to their own land. Have a picture of an ancient Jewish roll to show the children or draw one on the board. Explain that it was made from the skins of animals. There were no printing-presses then, and every copy of God's word had to be made by hand with a pen. Ezra was a scribe and devoted much time to copying the law. If the children of your class can not read now they expect to learn very soon. Many of the people in Ezra's time did not know how to read. Has each child in the class a Bible? Tell how plentiful Bibles are now compared with the scarcity in Ezra's time. Bibles are now given to those who want them if they have no money to buy them.

A desire for God's word. A little boy once had a promise of a nice present from his mother. He did not know what it was to be, but was sure it would be something that he would enjoy. At last the day came and his mother brought him a nicely-bound, new Bible. The boy thought it was fine, but after all he was a little disappointed, for he did not care so much for the Bible as he ought. A few years later, however, he came to love his Bible greatly, for he had given his heart to God. The Jews in Ezra's time became hungry for the word of God and asked Ezra to read it to them, and he did. They were more eager for it than the boy was for a new Bible. While there are many who do not care for the word of God there are many also who count it a rich treasure.

Hearing the word. Tell the story in a vivid manner of the scene near the water-gate of Jerusalem. There was a large crowd of men and women, and children also, waiting eagerly to hear the word. Tell how they all stood up when Ezra opened the book or roll, and responded when he praised the Lord. Tell of the high pulpit and the thirteen priests who stood with Ezra upon it. The children may be able to tell you how long the reading of the law continued. It must have been six hours that the people listened. Compare that with the length of time the children are in Sunday-school each week.

Obedying the word. The first effect of the reading of the word to the Jews was to make them sad. They believed God was speaking to them and they found that they had been doing many things that were wrong. They were sorry that they had sinned, but were glad that they now knew what God required of them and were willing to do it. Describe the feast of Tabernacles, as to how it was observed and the event which it commemorated. Tell how the people confessed their sins and made a covenant with God.

LESSON XIII

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Dec. 18.—Birth of Christ.—Matt. 2:1-12. Tu.—Herod's cruelty.—Matt. 2:13-23. Wed.—Simeon and Anna.—Luke 2:25-40. Th.—Sent of God.—1 John 4:9-19. Fr.—Christ's coming foretold.—Isa. 9:1-7. Sat.—The kingdom of Christ.—Psa. 2:1-12. Su.—The glorified Christ.—Rev. 1:9-20.

JESUS BORN IN BETHLEHEM—Christmas Lesson.—Matt. 2: 1-12.

AUTHORIZED VERSION

(Memory Verses 11, 12)

SUPT.—1 Now when Je'sus was born in Beth'le-hem of Ju-dæ'a in the days of Her'od the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Je-ru'sa-lem,

School.—2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

3 When Her'od the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Je-ru'sa-lem with him.

4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

5 And they said unto him, In Beth'le-hem of Ju-dæ'a: for thus it is written by the prophet,

6 And thou Beth'le-hem, in the land of Ju'da, art not the least among the princes of Ju'da: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Is'ra-el.

7 Then Her'od, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

8 And he sent them to Beth'le-hem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Ma'ry his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Her'od, they departed into their own country another way.

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1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethle-hem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, Wise-men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, 2 Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we saw his star in the east, and are come to worship him. 3 And when Herod the king heard it, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he enquired of them where the Christ should be born. 5 And they said unto him, In Bethle-hem of Judea: for thus it is written through the prophet, 6 And thou Bethle-hem, land of Judah, art in no wise least among the princes of Judah:

For out of thee shall come forth a governor, Who shall be shepherd of my people Israel.

7 Then Herod privily called the Wise-men, and learned of them exactly what time the star appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethle-hem, and said, Go and search out exactly concerning the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word, that I also may come and worship him. 9 And they, having heard the king, went their way; and lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. 10 And when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. 11 And they came into the house and saw the young child with Mary his mother; and they fell down and worshipped him; and opening their treasures they offered unto him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. 12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. Luke 2: 11.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—The search of those who seek Jesus is rewarded.

TOPIC.—The vital question.

OUTLINE.—I. The coming of the wise men. II. Herod's distress and plot. III. The finding of Jesus.

TIME.—B. C. 4, early in the year.

PLACES.—Jerusalem; Bethlehem.

INTRODUCTION.—This lesson follows very appropriately the studies of the now closing year. We have had the history of the decline and fall of the nations of Israel and the restoration of the Jews. We have had the last historic events recorded in the Old Testament. Our studies have included many promises of the coming of Christ, and the blessings accompanying his advent have been set forth under a variety of figures. The scriptures give no account of the period from Malachi, about B. C. 400, to B. C. 6. We learn, however, that the hope of the coming Messiah still survived, and there were some who were prepared to receive him when he came. At the time of Christ's birth John, his forerunner, was six months old. An account of his parentage and birth is given in Luke 1, 2.

COMMENTARY.—I. THE COMING OF THE WISE MEN (VS. 1, 2). 1. when Jesus was born.—The month and the day of Christ's birth are not definitely known, but the date now accepted, December 25, B. C. 4, corresponds to the facts which

we have bearing upon the event. It appears inconsistent to say that Christ was born four years before Christ, but it must be borne in mind that during several centuries after the coming of Christ there was no uniformity among nations in reckoning time. Finally, in the sixth century, a learned monk, Dionysius Exiguus, was appointed to ascertain the time of Christ's birth, and it was ordered that history should be dated from that time; but Dionysius, who first published his calculations in A. D. 526, put the birth of Jesus about four years too late. in Bethlehem.—Bethlehem means, "House of bread." Bethlehem was situated six miles south of Jerusalem, of Judea.—There was another Bethlehem, which was situated in Galilee (Josh. 19: 15). The name Judea was given to the region comprising the southern part of Palestine. The greater part of Judea was formerly the territory occupied by the tribe of Judah. Herod.—Herod the Great. He was an Edomite, and although a proselyte to the Jewish religion, was notorious for his wickedness and cruelty. He reigned thirty-seven years in Judea and died a few months after the birth of Christ. At this time "the scepter was departing from Judah, a sign that the Messiah was now at hand," wise men.—Or magi. "Originally a class of priests among the Persians and Medes, who formed the king's privy counsel." They were men of learning and wealth. Augustine and Chrys-

ostom say there were twelve magi, but the common belief is there were but three. "The Persian magi believed in a Messiah or future Savior, who should in the latter day appear and renew the world in righteousness."—*Whedon*. **from the east**—Perhaps from Media, or Persia, or possibly from Arabia. **to Jerusalem**—It was natural for them to expect to find Jesus, the new-born King, in the Jewish capital. They had reason to suppose that the birth of a king would be generally known.

2. where is he—This inquiry in Jerusalem brought Jesus into popular notice and called attention to the fact that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. **born King of the Jews**—This was a title unknown to the earlier history of Israel and applied to no one except the Messiah. It reappears in the inscription over the cross.—*Carr*. Notice that Jesus was "born" a King. **his star**—Many interpreters, especially those who seek to eliminate the supernatural, explain the "star," or "sidereal appearance," by a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn, which occurred in May, B. C. 7, and again in December with Mars added. It is, however, much more in harmony with all the facts to believe that the star which attracted the attention of the magi was provided for the occasion. **to worship him**—To do him homage. They were bold to confess the object of their coming.

11. HEROD'S DISTRESS AND PLOT (vs. 3-8).

3. heard these things—The inquiry of the wise men for the infant King was reported to Herod at once, and created a profound sensation. **was troubled**—The remembrance of his past deeds of cruelty and oppression, and his knowledge of the Roman policy in making frequent changes in the rulers of her provinces combined to arouse his fears that his tenure of office was exceedingly uncertain. He feared that the King whom the wise men had come to worship was about to displace him. **all Jerusalem with him**—Fearing that he would make this an occasion for renewing his acts of bloodshed. **4. had gathered**—He assembled the Sanhedrin.—*Lightfoot*. **chief priests**—This expression probably comprehends the acting high priest and his deputy, those who had been high priests—for at this time the office was often transferred by the Roman authorities—and "the heads of the twenty-four sacerdotal families, which David had distributed into so many courses." **scribes**—The learned interpreters of the Mosaic law, and the collectors of the traditions of the elders. Many of them were Pharisees. **demanded of them**—Because they would be most likely to know. **where the Christ (R. V.)**—Or the Messiah, the official title of the promised deliverer. "The wise men had said nothing about the Christ, or the Messiah, but only about the King of the Jews. Herod saw that this King must be the expected Messiah."

5. by the prophet—The prophecy is found in Mic. 5:2. **6. art in no wise least (R. V.)**—Micah says, "Though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel." This made Bethlehem "in no wise least." Although Bethlehem was little, yet it was exalted above all the other cities of Israel. **the princes**—"The thousands" (Mic. 5:2). The tribe had been subdivided into thousands, and over each subdivision there was a chieftain or prince.—*Morison*. **a Governor**—To control and rule. **who shall be shepherd (R. V.)**—To feed and care for his flock as a shepherd. Christ is both Shepherd and King. **my people Israel**—Israel was God's people in a peculiar sense. **7. privily called**—Herod desired to keep the time of Christ's birth as secret as possible lest

the Jews who hated him should take occasion to rebel. **enquired of them diligently**—"Learned of them exactly."—*R. V.* He inquired of them the exact time and received positive information as to the time the star appeared. Assuming that the star appeared when the child was born, he would thus have some idea of the age of the child. **8. he sent them**—He assumed control; but they followed the directions of the Lord. **search diligently**—Herod was honest in making this charge to them; he greatly desired to receive definite word concerning the new King. **and worship him also**—Herod had no desire to worship Jesus. His only object in desiring to know about him was that he might put him to death, but he was to be defeated in his cruel purpose.

111. THE FINDING OF JESUS (vs. 9-12). **9. the star...went before them**—The same star which they had seen in their own country now again appears. The star had disappeared for a time and this led them to inquire in Jerusalem for the young King whom they sought. Supernatural helps should not be expected where ordinary means are to be had. **stood over**—The star pointed out the very house.—*Benson*. **10. they rejoiced**—The Greek is very emphatic. They rejoiced exceedingly because they saw they were about to find the child and because they had such unmistakable proof of being in divine order. That alone is enough to cause rejoicing. **11. fell down**—They prostrated themselves before him according to the eastern custom. "In this act the person kneels and puts his head between his knees, his forehead at the same time touching the ground. It was used to express both civil and religious reverence."—*Clarke*. **gifts**—The people of the East did not approach into the presence of kings without bringing them presents. The custom still prevails in many places. **gold, etc.**—Gold would always be useful, while frankincense and myrrh were prized for their delicious fragrance. These were the very presents Isaiah mentioned: "All they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense" (Isa. 60:6). "Incense, or frankincense, is a resinous gum, flowing from a tree, gashed for the purpose, growing in Arabia and Lebanon. Myrrh is also a gum obtained from a tree in Arabia."—*Whedon*.

12. warned of God in a dream—God communicated his purpose to them in a manner that they understood, and the impression or conviction was so clear that they at once obeyed. **should not return to Herod**—The command had been given them by Herod to return to him with a report regarding the child Jesus, but now there came a command from a higher source not to return to Herod. God could have preserved the life of the infant Savior, even if Herod had known all the facts about him, yet he saw fit to blend human agency with divine in his protection. **another way**—They could easily have gone east from Bethlehem and thus returned to their homes without going back to Jerusalem.

QUESTIONS.—Where was Jesus born? When? Who was king of Judea? What was the character of this king? Who came to Jerusalem seeking for Jesus? From whence did they come? Why was Jesus called King of the Jews? How had the wise men been led in their search? Why was Herod troubled? Why was Jerusalem troubled? Whom did Herod gather together? For what purpose? What charge did Herod give the wise men? Why? How did they approach Christ? What warning was given to the wise men? After leaving Jesus what did the wise men do? How are we rewarded for seeking Jesus?

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. Passing from the close of Old Testament history to the early part of the New. 2. Refer to several prophecies given in the lessons of the year relating to the coming of Christ. 3. Consider evidences that Christ actually came into the world. 4. Blessings that the world enjoys to-day brought through the coming of Christ.

II. THEME.—Heaven's best gift to man.

III. SEARCHING FOR JESUS.—1. The widespread expectation of the coming of the Messiah. 2. A study of the wise men. (1) Their home. (2) Their character. (3) Their absorbing purpose. 3. The guiding star. 4. The inquiry at Jerusalem and the result. 5. Herod's desire to find Jesus. (1) His commands to the wise men. (2) His expressed purpose as to Jesus. (3) His real purpose. (4) His real purpose was known to God and defeated.

IV. FINDING JESUS.—1. Much time and great efforts were required on the part of the wise men. 2. They followed divine directions and their search was rewarded. 3. They worshiped Jesus. (1) Man is capable of offering worship to God. (2) Jesus, the Son of God, is divine and worthy of the worship of men and of angels. (3) Worship implies submission to, and faith in, the object of worship. (4) There is satisfaction and joy in true worship, whether that worship is on earth or in heaven. 4. Conditions upon which we may find Jesus now. 5. The effects upon those who find Jesus.

V. GIFTS FOR JESUS.—1. The Oriental custom of offering gifts to royal personages. 2. The wise men brought gifts for the new-born King. 3. These gifts were the most precious that could be procured. 4. Their hearts prompted them to offer their gifts. 5. Christians give themselves and all they have to Jesus. This is an intensely practical truth. 6. We give presents to one another out of love or regard. 7. Our best, even all we have, is none too good and none too much to give to Jesus.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—The vital question.

I. Propounded by wise men.

II. Investigated by rulers.

III. Solved according to scripture.

I. Propounded by wise men. "Where is he?" No greater subject ever engrossed the attention of mortals than pressed upon the wise men who journeyed to Jerusalem in search of him who was "born King of the Jews." The inquiry of the wise men was pointed and direct. It admitted no doubt as to the actual birth of a new king. Their question was important. It meant that a change of the greatest importance was at hand. It touched the interests of all the world and inspired glorious hope to believing hearts. The faith of the wise men stood in strong contrast with the hypocrisy of Herod, and this contrast between the Gentiles and the unbelief of the Jews has been fully verified in the course of history. The first chapter of this gospel points out the part the Jewish people had in connection with the Messiah. His genealogy and birth show that salvation was of the Jews. This second chapter presents the interests of the Gentile world in Christ. The star was the first ray of light to the Gentile world. The wise men were not in fear of any loss by the advent of a new king, though he were born to another nation. They were not guilty of any crimes against his people and so they were benefited by each new revelation respecting him. They were not only wise for their much


learning but because they sought full enlightenment regarding God's revelation to the world of which they had gained only a faint glimmer. Their course had been straightforward since the first light fell upon them. From the first to the last they were divinely guided. They were encouraged in their hopes by an inward inspiration. The star had given testimony. Their hearts credited that token and they went to Jerusalem, the center of Jewish worship, to gain a more perfect knowledge.

II. Investigated by rulers. The scriptures were called into use as the source of information upon the inquiry of the wise men. The Jews and Gentiles compared notes about Christ. The Gentiles knew the time when the star appeared. The Jews knew the place by the scriptures. The Gentiles sought further knowledge in all sincerity. Herod called upon his chief men to see what was written, but he had an unprincipled purpose in looking into the scriptures. He was a man made up of falsehood and cruelty, yet bearing the title of "Herod the Great." Christ, in the manger, was a terror to that unjust monarch, on his throne. It was a mark of humiliation put upon the Lord Jesus that though he was "the desire of all nations," yet his coming into the world was little observed and his birthplace obscure. Though on some accounts Bethlehem was little, yet it had the preeminence over all the cities of Israel in that Christ was born there. The wise men fearlessly inquired, "Where is he?" while Herod privately inquired of them "what time the star appeared." He clothed his evil design under the appearance of religion. He attempted to deceive the sincere, earnest seekers after Christ by professing to have the same desire they had in finding Jesus.

III. Solved according to scripture. The knowledge of the Gentiles was increased through the scriptures and their faith strengthened and their way directed, while the same truth condemned the Jews who did not seek the Christ. The inconsistency of Herod is also seen in that he believed the letter but rejected the spirit of the scriptures. The wise men journeyed from a far country to worship the new-born King, while the Jews, his kinsmen, would not go to the next town to bid him welcome. It might have been a discouragement to those wise men to find him whom they sought diligently, thus neglected by his own nation. Without waiting to witness his reception by his own nation, the wise men expressed their acceptance of him as the true King according to their scriptures, and proceeded to the place where the infant Savior was—concealed yet well known, hated and feared yet longed for and loved, signally despised yet marvelously honored, beset by extreme dangers yet kept in perfect safety. The wise men did not count themselves baffled or deceived when they saw the place where he was born; but as having found the King they sought, they first presented themselves to him and then their gifts.

T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

<p>JESUS STOOPED TO THE MANGER, THE CROSS AND THE TOMB. HE GAVE HIS LIFE FOR ME. MY MOTTO: ALL FOR JESUS.</p>		<p>HE IS IN HEAVEN AT THE FATHER'S RIGHT HAND - INTERCEDING FOR YOU AND ME. "I AM COMING LORD, COMING NOW TO THEE."</p>
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Practical Applications

The name. "Now when Jesus was born" (v. 1), "Thou shalt call his name Jesus" (Matt. 1: 21). A man's name represents his character. Herod's name is a synonym of cruelty; Abraham's, of faith; Stephen's, of martyrdom; John's, of love; Jesus', of salvation. His name has power to save. A brave cavalry officer, dying of his wounds, thought himself on the field at the head of his gallant men, and that an enemy's gun was in front of them ready to be fired. He was greatly distressed. At the mention of the name of Jesus his agitation ceased, his delirium passed away; a smile lit up his pale face, and he said in a low tone, "Jesus, Jesus! It is he who said: 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' I want rest; I am weary." The name of Jesus saved him from delirium and he was restful and happy until the spirit took its flight to God. Jesus is able to save "to the uttermost" (Heb. 7: 25); able to save from the power of sin as well as its penalty (Rom. 6: 2, 14); able to keep us from committing sin (1 John 3: 5-9); able to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1: 9), and able to "keep" us clean.

The prophecy. "It is written by the prophet" (v. 5). A study of prophecy gives a miniature life of Jesus (Isa. 7: 14; Mic. 5: 2; Isa. 9: 1, 2; Gen. 49: 10; Hos. 11: 1; Jer. 31: 15; Isa. 40: 3; John 1: 23; Matt. 3: 3; Psa. 78: 2; Isa. 35: 5; Isa. 61: 1, 2; Zech. 9: 9; Psa. 41: 9; Zech. 11: 12, 13; Zech. 13: 7; Isa. 53: 12; Psa. 22: 18; Psa. 22: 1; Psa. 69: 21; Zech. 12: 10; John 1: 45; Acts 13: 27; 1 Cor. 2: 8). "In Bethlehem" (v. 1). An insignificant village, not mentioned among the many towns at the time of the division of the land. "In a manger" (Luke 2: 7). Not in a palace, not in a house of luxury, not in a cottage surrounded by brightness, but in a limestone cave, did the Christ-child open his infant eyes to earth. Was this to teach us how little God cares for externals? That the Christly heart will not covet gaudy surroundings? That Jesus has a tender sympathy for the poorest?

Seeking a king. "Born King of the Jews" (v. 2). The gospel of Matthew is the story of Jesus as King. Its key-word, "kingdom," is found fifty-six times. Its key-phrase, "kingdom of heaven," is found thirty-two times and nowhere else in the New Testament. Matthew gives his legal genealogy, his royal pedigree from David, source of Jewish rule; from Abraham, source of Jewish blessing (Matt. 1: 1). Jesus was born King, but he waited—he is waiting still for the kingdom (Luke 19: 15; Matt. 26: 29). The prayer, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth" (Matt. 6: 10), has never been literally fulfilled. It will be some day. Christ rules the hearts of his own to-day as a shepherd (v. 6, R. V.). The characteristic of his spiritual kingdom is patience (Rev. 1: 9). Christ will rule over men one day with a rod of iron (Psa. 2: 9). The characteristic of his literal kingdom will be power (Rev. 12: 10).

Rejoicing, worship and gifts. The wise men, rejoicing at the cradle of the infant King, carry our thought further to another day when a multitude of redeemed men and angels shall cry with a loud voice (Rev. 5: 12). They gave themselves, then their gifts (2 Cor. 8: 4, 5). They saw, they "fell down," thus presenting their "bodies a living sacrifice" (Rom. 12: 1); they "worshiped," pouring out their souls' adoration; then "they offered unto him gifts" (v. 11, R. V.). "They presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh" (v. 11). As a Savior Jesus is God's great gift to us.

A. C. M.

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—It is our privilege to find Jesus and give our best to him.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

THE BABE OF BETHLEHEM

Seeking
Finding
Worshiping
Giving to

JESUS

The Babe of Bethlehem. Great interest centers about a new baby in the home. It is talked about and praised and fondled. Friends come in to admire it and to rejoice with the parents. No babe, however, has been the subject of so much interest as the Babe of Bethlehem. Tell again the story which the children have heard over and over of the Christ-child in the stable in Bethlehem. Sing with the children, "Luther's Cradle Hymn," which begins, "Away in a manger, no crib for his bed," teaching it to them if they do not know it.

Seeking Jesus. The story of the long journey of the wise men is always interesting and inspiring. Tell how they were made to realize that Christ's coming was near. The children can tell you how the wise men knew the direction they must go in order to find Jesus. Have a map so that you can point out their starting-point and the distance they traveled to reach Jerusalem, and the location of Bethlehem.

Finding Jesus. Call out from the class, by questioning, the interview of the wise men with Herod, and the feelings that Herod had because of the report that the King of the Jews was born. Describe briefly Herod's character and the command that he gave the wise men. Tell how they learned of Jesus' birthplace, and how they were able to find it. Note their feelings when they finally found the child Jesus.

Worshiping Jesus. Notice that the wise men had told in Jerusalem that they had come from the East to worship Jesus. Ask the children what it means to worship God. We worship him when we pray to him from our hearts and give him praise and honor. We worship him in songs of thanksgiving and adoration. True worship springs from the heart.

Giving to Jesus. Let the children tell you something about the gifts they are bestowing upon others at this Christmas time, and the reasons why they are giving them. If any of them are giving from selfish motives, show them what should be the motive in making gifts. Let them tell you also about the gifts they are receiving, with the idea of showing them that we should neither give selfishly nor receive selfishly. Explain to the class the nature of the gifts brought to Jesus from the East by the wise men. All the gifts presented were suitable to give to a king. Jesus is our King and our gifts to him should be ourselves with our time, our voices, our powers to go and to work, and our property. We can not withhold anything from him and be satisfied with the gift we make. In Africa the Christian converts are taught to give to the cause of the Lord. As they do not have money, as we do here, they bring what they have—chickens, eggs, grains or vegetables from the garden. We should give our hearts to him now.

LESSON XIV

HOME READINGS.—Mon., Dec. 25.—Daniel and his companions.—Dan. 1:8-20. Tu.—Ezekiel a watchman.—Ezek. 3:1-27. Wed.—The second temple.—Ezra 3:1-4:5. Th.—Belshazzar's feast.—Dan. 5:1-31. Fr.—Ezra's journey.—Ezra 8:15-36. Sat.—Nehemiah rebuilds the wall.—Neh. 4:1-23. Su.—Ezra teaches the law.—Neh. 8:1-18.

REVIEW.—Read Ezek. 36: 25-35.

SUPT.—25 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

School.—26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

28 And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers: and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

29 I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you.

30 And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen.

31 Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.

32 Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Is'ra-el.

33 Thus saith the Lord God: In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded.

34 And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by.

35 And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of E'den; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited.

SUPT.—What is the GOLDEN TEXT? School.—If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9.

PRACTICAL TRUTH.—The Lord brings deliverance to his people.

TOPIC.—Judah's captivity and return.

INTRODUCTION.—The lessons which we review today cover the history of the Jewish nation from the first captivity of Judah, B. C. 606, to the close of Old Testament history, with an account of the infancy of Christ added. We can not fail to be impressed with the mercy of God as manifested in his dealings with his people during their captivity and after the return to Jerusalem. Some of the most striking examples of faith and devotion are seen during the Babylonish captivity.

SUMMARY.—Lesson XI. Topic: True purpose. Place: Babylon. What Daniel was in his youth was a prophecy of what he would be when the weighty responsibilities of life should come upon him. He showed integrity, decision, steadfastness, clearness of perception and faith.

XII. Topic: Religious faith tested. Place: Dura, near Babylon. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were determined to keep the law of God, even though they could see no way of escape from the fiery furnace. Their faith was unshaken and they were honored with the divine presence in the fiery furnace.

XIII. Topic: Prayer restricted by law. Place: Babylon. In the supreme test that came upon Daniel he was true to his God. He showed no disposition to refrain from prayer, even when he knew the king's decree and knew that the law of the Medes and Persians was unalterable.

I. Topic: The uplifted life. Place: Ezekiel was a prophet of the Lord in the land of Babylon. A remarkable vision was granted to him, and a clearly defined commission was given as to his work. Under the figure of his eating the roll is represented his preparation for his prophetic ministry.

II. Topic: The immeasurable gospel. Place: Tel-abib, by the river Chebar. In Ezekiel's vision of the stream issuing from underneath the temple is seen the blessedness of the Christian age. Salvation is shown to be abundant and free.

III. Topic: A new epoch for Judah. Places: Babylon; Jerusalem. King Cyrus proclaimed the

return of the Jewish captives to their own land according to a prophecy delivered by Isaiah two hundred years before this time.

IV. Topic: Foundation principles. Place: Jerusalem. Religious services were established soon after the arrival of the Jews at Jerusalem, and work upon the temple was commenced. There was a mingling of joy and sorrow when the foundation was laid.

V. Topic: True intercession. Place: Jerusalem. The inspired psalmist gives utterance to his gratitude to God for the return of his people from Babylon. There is prayer for still greater blessings, and faith that the Lord would abundantly bless his people.

VI. Topic: Life crises. Place: Shushan, in Persia. During the captivity Esther, a Jewish maiden, became queen of Persia, and by her courage, through the help of the Lord, succeeded in saving her people from the destruction which Haman had wickedly plotted to accomplish.

VII. Topic: Decisive events. Place: Babylon. Although Belshazzar, king of Babylon, must have known something of the true God, he was guilty of sacrilege in using for his impious feast the sacred vessels taken from the temple at Jerusalem. Through the writing upon the wall of the banquet hall the king was shown his fate, which overtook him that same night.

VIII. Topic: Ezra's faith. Places: Babylon; Jerusalem. Through the permission and aid of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, Ezra the scribe was able to organize a company of Jews who made a successful return from Babylon to Jerusalem.

IX. Topic: Piety and patriotism. Place: Shushan, in Persia. Ninety-one years after the return of the first company of exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem, a faithful servant of God heard of the desolation of the sacred city of the Jews, and wept and prayed for the prosperity of Zion.

X. Topic: Demonstrated faith. Place: Jerusalem. Nehemiah's prayer gained for him the opportunity to go to Jerusalem to accomplish his part in the restoration of the Jewish nation.

XI. Topic: Devotion to duty. Place: Jerusalem. Nehemiah was beset by enemies who were determined to accomplish his overthrow.

XII. Topic: Primitive piety. Place: Jerusa-

lem. It was a hopeful indication for the Jewish nation that the people were intent on hearing the word of the Lord. Ezra the scribe appears as a tower of strength to the people in his faithfulness in preserving the law and giving it to the people.

XIII. Topic: The vital question, Places: Jerusalem; Bethlehem. Jesus was sought by the wise men and by Herod from very different motives. The new-born King was found by those whose loving hearts prompted their search.

TABULAR VIEW

No.	SUBJECTS	GOLDEN TEXTS	PRACTICAL TRUTHS	OUTLINES
XI.	Daniel and His Companions — Temperance Lesson. Dan. 1:8-20.	It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth. Rom. 14:21.	God blesses those who make and maintain right choices.	I. Daniel's purpose and request. II. The request granted. III. Daniel and his companions favored.
XII.	Daniel's Companions in the Fiery Furnace. Dan. 3:1-30.	The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. Heb. 13:6.	The Christian hero can die but he will not do wrong.	I. A royal decree disregarded. II. A courageous answer. III. A marvelous deliverance.
XIII.	Daniel in the Lions' Den. Dan. 6:1-28.	The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. Psa. 34:7.	One should be faithful to God regardless of consequences.	I. A plot against Daniel. II. Faithful Daniel cast to the lions. III. Daniel delivered. IV. God's name magnified.
I.	The Prophet Ezekiel a Watchman. Ezek. 3:1-27.	Hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. Ezek. 3:17.	God makes his children watchmen to warn sinners of their danger.	I. Ezekiel's commission. II. The message. III. A vision of the divine glory.
II.	The Life-giving Stream. Ezek. 47:1-12.	Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. Rev. 22:17.	The stream of gospel grace is within reach of all.	I. The source of the stream. II. An increasing stream. III. An efficacious stream.
III.	The Return from the Captivity. Ezra 1:1-11; 2:64-70.	He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. Mic. 7:18.	God deals with his people in great mercy.	I. The proclamation of Cyrus. II. Preparation to return. III. The numbers returning.
IV.	The Foundation of the Second Temple Laid. Ezra 3:1-4:5.	Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise. Psa. 100:4.	It is a privilege to have part in the pure worship of God.	I. The worship of God restored. II. The foundation of the temple laid. III. The work of building hindered.
V.	A Psalm of Deliverance. Psa. 85:1-13.	The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. Psa. 126:3.	God is faithful in fulfilling his word.	I. Gratitude for deliverance. II. Prayer for greater blessings. III. Assurance of prosperity.
VI.	Esther Pleading for Her People. Esth. 4:1-5:3.	The Lord preserveth all them that love him. Psa. 145:20.	God's people have recourse to prayer in times of danger.	I. Haman's wicked plot. II. Esther's opportunity. III. Esther's courage. IV. Esther's success.
VII.	Belshazzar's Feast and Fato—World's Temperance Lesson. Dan. 5:1-31.	God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. Eccl. 12:14.	There is no escape from God's judgments.	I. Belshazzar's impious feast. II. The writing on the wall. III. Belshazzar reprieved. IV. The writing interpreted. V. The writing fulfilled.
VIII.	Ezra's Journey to Jerusalem. Ezra 8:15-36.	The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him. Ezra 8:22.	Prayer and consecrated efforts secure results.	I. Assembling for the journey. II. Prayer for success. III. Duties assigned. IV. The journey and arrival at Jerusalem.
IX.	Nehemiah's Prayer. Neh. 1:1-11.	The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. James 5:16.	Love for God's cause inspires effectual prayer.	I. A report from the land of Judah. II. Nehemiah's prayer for help.
X.	Nehemiah Rebuilds the Wall of Jerusalem. Neh. 4:1-23.	Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. 1 Cor. 16:13.	It is our duty to work and watch and pray.	I. Enemies scoff at the Jews. II. A conspiracy formed. III. Nehemiah's defense. IV. The builders at work.
XI.	Nehemiah and His Enemies. Neh. 6:1-19.	The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Psa. 27:1.	A firm faith in God makes one courageous.	I. A plot against Nehemiah. II. A false accusation. III. Enemies within the city.
XII.	Ezra Teaches the Law. Neh. 8:1-18.	The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. Psa. 19:7.	The word of God brings light and gladness to his people.	I. God's word asked for and read. II. The effects of hearing God's word. III. The feast of Tabernacles observed.
XIII.	Jesus Born in Bethlehem—Christmas Lesson. Matt. 2:1-12.	Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. Luke 2:11.	The search of those who seek Jesus is rewarded.	I. The coming of the wise men. II. Herod's distress and plot. III. The finding of Jesus.

A Teaching Plan

I. INTRODUCTORY.—1. The total period covered by the lessons of the year, from B. C. 975 to B. C. 444. 2. The number of years covered by the lessons since the last review is one hundred sixty-two. 3. Changes in the condition of the Jewish people. 4. Changes in the government of Babylon. 5. The fulfillment of prophecy in Israel's restoration.

II. THEME.—A restored nation.

III. A RESTORED PEOPLE.—1. The Jews in Babylon. (1) They clung to the religious faith of their fathers. (2) They had the example of faithful prophets. (a) Daniel. (b) Ezekiel. (3) They were powerfully influenced by Nehemiah and Ezra. 2. Cyrus as an agency in the return from captivity. 3. Zerubbabel the leader of the return. 4. The numbers who returned with Zerubbabel. 5. The assistance rendered by those who remained in Babylon. 6. The disposition of many to remain in the land of captivity rather than to return to Jerusalem.

IV. A RESTORED TEMPLE.—1. The temple destroyed and lying in ruins fifty years. 2. The restoration of religious services before the temple was rebuilt. 3. The foundation of the temple laid. 4. The varying emotions of those beholding the foundations of the second temple. 5. The long time passing before the temple was completed. It was twenty years, making seventy years from the time of its destruction to its completion.

V. A RESTORED CITY.—1. The attitude of the peoples surrounding Jerusalem toward the Jews. 2. Nehemiah in the Persian court and his interest in the city of Jerusalem. 3. His commission. 4. His arrival at Jerusalem. 5. His successful completion of the walls. 6. The difficulties encountered. 7. The lesson of cooperation in the work of the Lord.

VI. A RESTORED LAW.—1. Ezra's journey to Jerusalem and its advantages to the Jews. 2. His appearance upon the completion of the walls after years of silence. 3. The call of the people for the law. 4. The nature and place of the assembly. 5. The time occupied in reading the law. 6. The manner of the reading. 7. The effect upon the people of the reading of the law. 8. The covenant made by the people.

Practical Survey

TOPIC.—Judah's captivity and return.

- I. Biographies.
- II. Kings and kingdoms.

I. Biographies. The lessons under this review begin with the captivity of Judah and briefly cover its history until the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem after the return from the seventy years of captivity. Of those who were important in the affairs of Judah, ten have special mention in these lessons as leaders, namely, Daniel, the three Hebrews, Ezekiel, Zerubbabel, Esther, Mordecai, Ezra and Nehemiah. Lessons eleven, twelve and thirteen of the third quarter and lesson seven of the fourth give us the record of Daniel and the three Hebrews, who were carried to Babylon among the first captives. Their refusal to eat of the king's meat and to drink of his wine in their youth resulted in their becoming highly influential in the empire. Though they were severely persecuted for their loyalty to God they were instrumental on that account in bringing the worship of Jehovah before all Babylon. The fiery furnace for the three Hebrews, because they would not compromise, proved only God's way to advance them and his name among the heathen. Daniel in the lions' den, because he

would not forbear to pray to God for one month only, served only to spread abroad the worship of Jehovah. In after years, when the kingdom of Babylon was falling into the power of the Medes and Persians, Daniel was again the only man who could read God's message to the dissipated Belshazzar. Ezekiel the prophet, in lessons one and two, gives his experience in setting out to deliver God's messages to Judah, also his view of the gospel dispensation in the vision of the river. Not until he, by a thorough consecration of himself and a gracious unfolding of God's plan, had received "the uplifted life" could he enter into the needs of the people and sympathetically plead with them to repent. Zerubbabel, in lessons three and four, is mentioned as the appointed governor over the first company of returning captives who returned to rebuild the temple and establish the true worship of God. Lesson five is a psalm which unfolds a prayer of true intercession.

Lesson six brings Esther and Mordecai into the history of the Jews when the death of all that people was decreed by her husband, the king, through the crafty deceit of Haman the Agagite. By a fearless devotion Mordecai incurred the hatred of the enemy of God, which led to the death sentence. Esther's noble heroism resulted in saving the Jewish race at a time when the work of rebuilding Jerusalem was going on. Lessons eight and twelve tell of Ezra, who led the second company of returning exiles to Jerusalem. His piety and learning, his thoroughness in details and his faith in God's presence and power made him refuse any military escort from the king. His faith was rewarded in a triumphant journey. Nehemiah filled a very important place in the history of the returned Jews. At a time when he had reached manhood and occupied the position of the king's cup-bearer, his people were in great distress in Jerusalem. The wall around the city had not been rebuilt. The people were failing to be true to God, and were hated and persecuted by their enemies. Lessons nine, ten and eleven tell of his earnest prayer for his people, the consecration of himself to go to their assistance, the king's commission and appointment as governor, his struggles against aggressive opposition from his enemies, their efforts to deceive, slander and intimidate. In lesson thirteen we have the question which is above every other question in importance, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?"

II. Kings and kingdoms. Judah was taken captive under the king of Babylon. It was declared that her captivity should cover seventy years. It was prophesied that Cyrus should be the king who should proclaim their deliverance and return. Thus earthly kings and kingdoms rise and fall, but God, who holds the destiny of all men under his control, has brought unto us the King and Redeemer whose kingdom shall never end and whose power shall never fail until the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and Christ.

T. R. A.

Blackboard Exercise

XI. D.—H.C. XII. D.C.—P.F. XIII. D.—L.D. I. T.P.E.—W. II. T.L.G.S. III. T.R.—C. IV. T.F.—S.T.L. V. A.P.—B.	REVIEW UNTO YOU IS BORN A SAVIOR WHICH IS CHRIST THE LORD.	VI. E.P.—B. VII. W.T.S. VIII. E.J.—J. IX. N.P. X. N.N.—W.—L. XI. N.—E. XII. E.T.—L. XIII. C.L.
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Practical Applications

"They have not hurt me" (Dan. 6: 22). Daniel's faith never wavered from the time the king's decree was made until he was taken out of the den of lions. There was a solid basis for his faith. It had not had a mushroom growth. In his youth were decided evidences of his strong faith. The devotion that inspired him to pray in his chamber three times a day with his window open toward Jerusalem was a productive soil in which his faith grew strong. The king's decree did not find him cold and dead spiritually. His faith continued to grow as his enemies were carrying out their part of the plot. Neither the pressure of business cares and responsibility nor the fact of his being in a heathen court had dulled his spiritual senses. He came to the test with his faith unimpaired. He spent the night in perfect security, and could say, "They have not hurt me." The fires of persecution and affliction can not destroy faith. Faith is independent of the powers of earth and hell. Faith is indestructible.

"The waters were risen" (Ezek. 47: 5). The stream of salvation which has its source in infinite love, manifested in the atonement, can not be confined or choked. It is for the health of the nations and is destined to reach all lands. "The waters were risen" is an expression indicative of the increase of grace in the believer's soul. A constancy of faith, obedience, prayer and activity in Christian duty keeps open the channel which supplies the soul with divine grace. The stream of spirituality is designed to be an increasing one, and it is a diminishing one only where there is a lack in the believer.

"If I perish, I perish" (Esth. 4: 16). The declaration of Esther here recorded was the keynote of her success. Cowardly vacillation would have lost the day for her and her people. Crises arise in the life of the Christian, when he must close his eyes to that about him which insists on being seen, and must press his way forward, following the path of duty, bold in his faith in God. The instinct of self-preservation and the customs of the court of the Persian king said, "Do not venture unasked into the royal presence," but Esther's eye took in a larger vision, and God made the way clear and prosperous. It is only when our determination reaches the pitch indicated by Esther's words, "If I perish, I perish," that we really amount to anything in the work of the Lord. Christians of this stamp are a menace to the kingdom of Satan and a tower of strength to the cause of God. There is no presumption here. Luther was not presumptuous when he decided to go to Worms, nor was John Bunyan, nor John Wesley, when crises arose in their lives.

"Found wanting" (Dan. 5: 27). Here is a note of warning sounding through the ages. Weighed on the scales that the world loves to use, one may be full of haughtiness, arrogance and pride and pass the test. He may be greedy and unjust and still pass as a successful man. He may be full of selfishness and concealed sensuality and yet be considered full weight. He may even cover up a corrupt moral nature with a profession of religion and weigh all right according to the ecclesiastical scales, but when weighed in God's balances he will be found wanting. One is found wanting who places ease above known duty; who prefers worldly pleasure to spiritual enjoyment; who seeks the wealth of this world to the loss of the true riches; who shuns the cross of Christ for fear of reproach; and who tries to combine the service of Christ with the ways of the world. Oh, the bitterness of the sentence, "Found wanting!"

Hints to Primary Teachers

Central Thought.—The Lord is near those who fear him, to deliver them.

BLACKBOARD OUTLINE

<h2 style="margin: 0;">The Jews</h2> <h2 style="margin: 0;">The temple and city restored</h2>	{ In captivity in Babylon Returning to Jerusalem
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A starting point. The lessons reviewed are full of interesting and instructive stories. It might be well to select a number of these and assign them to the children of the class a week before review Sunday, giving them one each, and have the stories told by them in the class hour. The stories of Daniel and his three companions will form one group. The story of Zerubbabel, and the stories of Ezra's returning from captivity, laying the foundation of the temple and reading the law will form another group. The stories of Nehemiah's work will form another. The story of Esther stands by itself, as does also the story of the wise men seeking and finding Jesus. In having the stories told and in the discussions connected with them one should have regard for the order in which the events occurred.

In captivity. Call attention to the cause of the captivity of the Jews and the length of time from the first captivity to the first return. Under this topic the stories of Daniel and the three Hebrews are in place. Do not overlook the story of Belshazzar's feast, and impress the temperance lesson therein contained. Belshazzar is not the only man in history who was drinking in time of danger. Recall the incident of Ben-hadad's defeat. Men who drink are liable to run into danger. They have been known to lie down on the railroad tracks and go to sleep there. Although the story of Esther comes in point of time after the first captivity, it is in place here, inasmuch as it has to do with the Jews still in captivity and not with the return. This story gives an example of courage and united prayer.

Returning to Jerusalem. Notice particularly the part that Cyrus, the Persian king, had to do with the Jews' return. Call attention to the prophecy given about him long before. Call for the stories of Zerubbabel and Ezra in leading large companies of Jews from the land of captivity to Jerusalem. Have a map at hand to show the direction and the length of the journey.

The temple and the city restored. The story of the laying of the foundations of the temple should be told. Explain the difficulties in the way. Not only was the temple in ruins, but the houses of the city also. The people must have a place to live, and hence some time was given to providing dwelling houses. Note the gladness when the foundations were laid. In Nehemiah we have an example of a man deeply interested in the work of the Lord. Let the story of his work include his sadness in the palace of the king over the ruined walls of Jerusalem. The work of the Lord lay very near his heart. Let the facts concerning the rebuilding of the walls be brought out, especially those relating to the oneness of purpose on the part of the people and the opposition of enemies. A fitting close of the lesson will be the story of the visit of the wise men to the infant Jesus.

Aa'ron. Elder brother of Moses. He was consecrated to the priesthood (Exod. 28). His sons succeeded him.

Ab'a-na. A river of Damascus, which Naaman considered better than the Jordan (2 Kings 5: 12).

Ab'deel, servant of God. He was the father of Shelemiah (Jer. 36: 26).

Ab'don. Son of Micah (2 Chron. 34: 20), probably the same as Achbor (2 Kings 2: 12).

A-bed'-ne-go. The Chaldean name given to Azariah, one of the three friends and fellow captives of Daniel in Babylon (Dan. 1: 7).

A-bel'-me-ho'lah. A place in the Jordan valley, the home of Elisha (1 Kings 19: 16).

A'bra-ham, father of a multitude. Son of Terah, and the founder of the Jewish nation.

A'hab. The seventh king of Israel. He reigned twenty-two years. He was one of the most evil of Israel's kings. His wife was Jezebel, a heathen woman, who influenced him strongly toward idolatry.

A-ha'va. A place, or a river on the banks of which Ezra collected the second expedition which returned with him from Babylon to Jerusalem.

A'haz, possessor. Son of Jotham and eleventh king of Judah. He ascended the throne between the ages of twenty and twenty-five. He was distinguished for his idolatry and contempt of the true God. Against him many of the prophecies of Isaiah were directed.

A-hi'jah. A prophet and chronicler in the times of Solomon and Jeroboam (1 Kings 11: 29; 2 Chron. 9: 29).

A-hi'kam. Son of Shaphan; sent by Josiah to Huldah the prophetess when the book of the law was found in the temple. He and his son Gedaliah nobly befriended the prophet Jeremiah.

Am'mon-ites. Children of Ammon. Their country lay east of the Dead Sea.

A'moz, strong. The father of Isaiah (Isa. 1: 1).

A-ra'bi-an. An inhabitant of the country lying south of Palestine. Geshem, the Arabian, is mentioned as one of the enemies of Nehemiah (Neh. 6: 1).

A'sa. He was the third king of Judah after Solomon. He reigned forty-one years at Jerusalem. He restored the pure worship of God, purified Jerusalem from the infamous practices attending the worship of idols, and deprived his mother of the office of queen because she erected an idol to Astarte.

A'saph. A Levite, son of Berechiah, one of the leaders of David's choir. Psalms one and seventy-three to eighty-three are attributed to him. He was in after years celebrated as a seer as well as a musical composer.

Ash'do-dites. Dwellers in Ashdod, in Philistia, and enemies of Nehemiah (Neh. 4: 7).

Assh'ur; As'sur; As-syr'i-a. An ancient empire on the Tigris whose capital was Nineveh. In its splendor it was a world empire, and was hostile to the kingdom of Israel, which it took into captivity in B. C. 721. It was overthrown in B. C. 621 by the Medes and Babylonians after an existence of 1200 years.

Ath-a-l'lah. Daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. She was chosen as the wife of Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. Her influence drew into idolatry and crime both her husband and her son Ahaziah. After their premature death she usurped the throne, and sought to secure herself by the murder of all the seed royal. Only Joash, her grandson, then an infant, was saved by his aunt Jehosheba. Six years afterward he was brought from his place of refuge and crowned by the faithful high priest, Jehoiada, who at the same time caused Athaliah to be put to death.

Az-a-li'ah. Father of Shaphan the scribe (2 Kings 22: 3).

Az-a-ri'ah, or Uz-zi'ah. The ninth king of Judah. The first part of his reign was prosperous and happy but afterward, presuming to offer incense in the temple, he was smitten with leprosy.

Az'ri-el. The father of Seraiah, an officer of King Jehoiakim (Jer. 36: 26).

Baal. An idol of the Phœnicians whose worship was introduced among the Hebrews. The plural, Baalim, signifies images or statues of Baal (Judg. 2: 11).

Bab'y-lon. Babylonia was properly the province, including parts of Chaldea, of which the great and magnificent city of Babylon was the capital.

Bar'uch. The son of Neriah, of a distinguished family in the tribe of Judah. He was the faithful friend of Jeremiah. He wrote the divine message given to that prophet, and shared the prophet's punishment.

Beer-she'ba. An ancient place in the southern part of Palestine.

Be'li-al. A vile, worthless person (1 Kings 21: 13).

Bel-shaz'zar. King of Babylon, slain during a feast in his palace. He was the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, and the son of Nabonidus, with whom he was joint ruler of Babylon at the time of its capture by Cyrus.

Bel-te-shaz'zar. Name given to Daniel by Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 1: 7).

Ben-ha'dad. 1. King of Syria, B. C. 950; called Ben-hadad I (1 Kings 15: 18). 2. Ben-hadad II, son and successor of the former (1 Kings 20: 1). 3. Ben-hadad III, son and successor of Hazael. He was defeated by King Joash (2 Kings 13: 3-24).

Ben'ja-min. The youngest son of Jacob, and the name of one of the tribes of Israel.

Beth'-el, house of God. It was the residence of "the sons of the prophets" and priests (2 Kings 2: 2, 3).

Beth'le-hem. The birthplace of our Lord. It is a town about six miles south of Jerusalem.

Car'mel. A celebrated range of hills, twelve miles long, running northwest beside the plain of Esdraelon. Mount Carmel is the only great promontory upon the coast of Palestine. It is memorable for frequent visits of the prophets, Elijah and Elisha, and especially as the scene of the destruction of the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18).

Chal-de'ans. Philosophers, naturalists or soothsayers, whose principal employment was the study of mathematics and astrology, by which they pretended to foretell the destiny of men born under certain constellations.

Che'bar. A river of Chaldea; seat of Ezekiel's vision (Ezek. 1: 3).

Che'rith. A small brook flowing into the Jordan, where Elijah was fed by ravens.

Chis'leu. The ninth month of the Jewish sacred year, and third of the civil, corresponding to the last part of November and the first part of December (Neh. 1: 1).

Cy'rus. The founder of the Persian empire. He liberated the captive Jews according to prophecies uttered centuries before. Daniel was his favorite officer.

Da-mas'cus. The chief city of Syria, and is still in existence. It stands on the Barada River, about one hundred forty miles northeast of Jerusalem.

Dan. 1. A son of Jacob. 2. A city originally called Laish, at the northern extremity of Israel. It was one of the seats of calf-worship instituted by Jeroboam.

Dan'iel, judgment of God. Fourth of the greater

prophets; carried captive to Babylon, B.C. 604, and named Belteshazzar; made a governor under Darius. Daniel was one of the most spotless characters upon record. He maintained his integrity in the most difficult circumstances. His history deserves the careful and prayerful study of the young, and the lessons which it inculcates are weighty and rich in instruction.

Da-ri'us, the Mede. He was the son of Ahasuerus Astyages, and brother of Mandane, the mother of Cyrus. After a long war with the Babylonians, he gained possession of their empire after the death of his grand-nephew, Belshazzar, B.C. 538. He appointed one hundred twenty governors over the provinces of his kingdom, with three principal directors over them, of whom one was the prophet Daniel.

Da'vid. The second king of Israel. No character in Jewish history is more prominent than David. He excelled as a ruler, as a warrior and as a writer.

Del-ai'ah. The father of Shemaiah, a false prophet, who attempted to deceive and destroy Nehemiah.

Do'than. The place where Joseph was sold to the Ishmaelites, and the Syrians were smitten with blindness. It was on the caravan route from Syria to Egypt, about fifteen miles north of Shechem.

E'lah. 1. The fourth king of Israel. 2. The father of Hoshea, the last king of Israel.

E-li'jah. The renowned prophet. "He is described as long-haired and tall, roughly robed (2 Kings 1: 8), with a sheepskin girdle and mantle. In appearance and spirit he was a type of the true Hebrew seer." His parentage is unknown. He appeared suddenly, was bold and fearless, and at last was taken to heaven without tasting death.

E-li'sha. The pupil and successor of Elijah.

E-li'sha-ma. A scribe in the time of Jeremiah (Jer. 36: 12, 20, 21).

El-na'than, God hath given. A leader in the reign of Jehoiakim. He was his agent in persecuting the prophet Urijah, but protested against the burning of Jeremiah's prophecy.

En-eg'la-im. A place at the north end of the Dead Sea (Ezek. 47: 10).

En-ge'di. A town on the west shore of the Dead Sea (Ezek. 47: 10).

Ephra-im. One of the sons of Joseph, and the name of one of the tribes of Israel. "The portion of Ephraim was large and central, and embraced some of the most fertile land in all Israel," and consequently the tribe was prominent in the history of the nation.

E'sar-had'don, conqueror. A king of Assyria. He united Babylon to Assyria and reigned over both, B.C. 680-667.

Es'ther. A Jewess who became the wife of Ahasuerus, king of Persia, and saved the lives of her fellow Jews.

Eth-ba'al. The king of Zidon and father of Jezebel, Ahab's wife.

Ez'ra. A celebrated priest and leader of the Jewish nation—a learned scribe, versed in the divine and ceremonial laws of the people. As a reformer he was faithful in establishing again the regular worship of God at Jerusalem.

Gash'mu. See Geshem.

Ge-ha'zi. An attendant of Elisha. He appears in the story of the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4: 14-37), and in that of Naaman the Syrian, from whom he fraudulently obtained a portion of the present Elisha had refused. His wickedness was punished by a perpetual leprosy (2 Kings 5: 20-27).

Gem-a-ri'ah. A son of Shaphan the scribe (Jer. 36: 10-27).

Ge'shem. An Arabian, an enemy of Nehemiah (Neh. 2: 19).

Gil'e-ad. A mountainous region lying to the east of the Jordan, about sixty miles long and twenty miles wide.

Gil'gal. A town in Ephraim, north of Bethel, where a school of the prophets was maintained in Elijah's time.

Go-mor'rah. One of the cities of the plain destroyed by fire (Gen. 14: 1-11).

Go'zan. The district (Isa. 37: 12) to which the Israelitish captives were carried (2 Kings 17: 6; 1 Chron. 5: 26).

Hach-a-li'ah. Father of Nehemiah (Neh. 1: 1).

Ha'lah. This place is supposed to be the same as the Chalcitis of Ptolemy.

Ha'man. A prominent officer in the Persian empire. He sought to destroy the captive Jews, but his plot was frustrated, and he was slain.

Ha'math, fortress. Chief city of upper Syria.

Ham'me-lech, the king. Probably not a proper name. See Jer. 36: 26, R. V.

Ha'nan. One who assisted Ezra in giving public instruction in the law (Neh. 8: 7).

Ha-na'ni. A brother of Nehemiah (Neh. 1: 2; 7: 2).

Han-a-ni'ah. 1. A captain under King Uzziah (2 Chron. 26: 11). 2. The Hebrew name of Shadrach (Dan. 1: 7).

Hash-a-bi'ah. A Levite, who returned from the captivity with Ezra (Ezra 8: 19).

Hash-ba-da'na. An assistant to Ezra (Neh. 8: 4).

Hash'um. An assistant to Ezra (Neh. 8: 4).

Ha'tach. A chamberlain of Ahasuerus (Esth. 4: 5-10).

Ha-za'el. A king of Syria. He was a servant of King Ben-hadad, whom he slew, and seized the throne.

Hen-a'dad. His sons returned from captivity and assisted in restoring the temple (Ezra 3: 9).

Her'od. King of Judea at the time when Christ was born and who sought the life of the young child.

Hez-e-ki'ah. The twelfth king of Judah. His reign is memorable for his faithful efforts to restore the worship of Jehovah.

Hil-ki'ah. A name common among the Jews. 1. The father of Jeremiah. 2. An assistant of Ezra (Neh. 8: 4).

Ho-di'jah. A Levite who assisted Ezra (Neh. 8: 7).

Horeb. The same as Sinai. It was here that God gave the law to the Hebrews, and to this mountain Elijah was led when discouraged.

Ho-she'a. The last king of Israel. Under him the nation was taken in captivity into Assyria.

I-ri'jah. An officer who arrested Jeremiah (Jer. 37: 13).

Isaac. The son of Abraham and Sarah.

I-sai'ah, Jehovah's salvation. The son of Amoz, one of the most distinguished of the Hebrew prophets. He seems to have lived and prophesied wholly at Jerusalem. His prophecy continued about sixty years. He is appropriately named "the evangelical prophet."

Is-ra-el. The name given to Jacob at Peniel. The Hebrew name was called Israel before the division of the kingdom. The name later was applied to the ten seceding tribes.

Is'sa-char. One of the tribes of Israel.

Ja'cob. A son of Isaac and Rebekah. The name was sometimes applied to the Hebrew nation.

Ja'hath. An overseer in the work of repairing the temple in Josiah's time (2 Chron. 34: 12).

Ja'min. An assistant of Ezra (Neh. 8: 7).

Je-ho'ash. The same as Joash.

Je-hoi'a-da. A high priest during Athaliah's usurpation who, with his wife Jehosheba, saved the infant prince Joash. When Joash was about seven years of age Jehoiada caused him to be crowned king of Judah and caused Athaliah to be put to death.

Je-hoi'a-kim. The second son of Josiah. He was king during eleven years of luxury, extortion and idolatry. In the third year Nebuchadnezzar carried to Babylon a part of his princes and treasures. A year after his allies, the Egyptians, were defeated on the Euphrates; yet he despised the warnings of Jeremiah, and cast his book into the fire. At length he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, but was defeated and ingloriously slain.

Je-hosh'a-phat, God judges. The fourth king of Judah after the division of the kingdom. He was distinguished for his zeal for true religion and his firm trust in God.

Je'hu. The son of Hanani; a prophet, sent with messages from God to Baasha, king of Israel, and thirty years afterward to Jehoshaphat, king of Judah.

Je-hu'di. A messenger in the reign of Jehoia-kim.

Je-i'el. An officer in King Uzziah's army (2 Chron. 26: 11).

Je-rah'meel. An official of Jehoia-kim (Jer. 36: 26).

Jer-e-mi'ah. Son of Hilkiah; the second of the greater prophets, and one of the chief Old Testament seers. He prophesied under Josiah, Jehoia-kim and Zedekiah and also after the captivity of the latter.

Jer'i-cho. A rich and strong city in the Jordan valley. In Elijah's time a school of the prophets was located here.

Jer-o-bo'am. 1. The first king of Israel after its separation from Judah. He was an Ephraimite, the son of Nebat and Zeruah. 2. The thirteenth king of Israel.

Je-ru'sa-lem. The chief city of the Holy Land and to the Christian the most illustrious in the world. It was the capital of Judah. Its chief glory was the temple.

Jesh'u-a. The son of Jozadak, and high priest of the Jews at their return to Jerusalem after their captivity in Babylon. He did good service in restoring the city, the temple and divine worship.

Jes'se. The father of David.

Jews. A contraction of the word "Judah." After the captivity it was a name given to the Hebrews.

Jeze-bel. The daughter of Ethbaal, king of Tyre and Zidon, and the wicked wife of Ahab, king of Israel.

Jez'reel-ite. An inhabitant of Jezreel, a town in the tribe of Issachar, where Ahab had his royal residence.

Jo'ah. Josiah's recorder (2 Chron. 34: 8).

Jo'a-haz. The father of Joah (2 Chron. 34: 8).

Jo'ash. The son of Ahaziah. Athaliah, his grandmother, attempted to slay all the children of Ahaziah, in order that she herself might reign over Judah. Joash was rescued and became king of Judah at the age of seven years.

Jo'nah. The son of Amittai. He was commissioned to preach to the Ninevites. He tried to run away from his duty, but was led to obey God's command with the result that the city was spared.

Jordan, descender. The chief river of Canaan, running from north to south and dividing the land into two parts, of which the larger lay on the west.

Jo-si'ah. A son of Amon and his successor on the throne of Judah. He abolished idolatry and taught the people the newly-found law.

Jo'tham. The son and successor of Uzziah, and the tenth king of Judah.

Jo'za-dak. A priest, the father of Jeshua.

Ju'da. The New Testament form of the name Judah. The name of one of the tribes of Israel. The name of the southern kingdom after the secession of the two tribes.

Ju-dæ'a. A Roman province comprising the southern part of Palestine.

Kad'mi-el. A Jew who returned with Ezra (Ezra 8: 9).

Ke-li'ta. An assistant of Ezra (Neh. 8: 7).

Ki'dron. The brook or valley just east of Jerusalem.

Ko'hath-ites. Descendants of the second son of Levi. Theirs was the duty of bearing the ark and the sacred vessels.

Leb'a-non. A mountain in the north of Canaan and south of Syria.

Le'vi. The third son of Jacob, and ancestor of the priestly branch, including priests and Levites. The Kohathites, Gershonites and Merarites belonged to this line.

Ma-nas'seh. The son of Hezekiah and his successor on the throne of Judah.

Ma'ry. 1. The mother of Jesus. 2. Mary Magdalene. A follower of Jesus. She visited the tomb where Christ was laid (John 20: 1).

Mat-ti-thi'ah. An assistant of Ezra.

Medes. The inhabitants of Media, the country northwest of Persia and south of the Caspian Sea. The empire of the Medes was at its height B. C. 625.

Me-het'a-beel. An ancestor of Shemaiah, a false prophet (Neh. 6: 10).

Mel'zar. A steward. It is not a proper noun.

Me-rari. A son of Levi and the head of the Merarites.

Me'shach. The Chaldean name of Mishael (Dan. 1: 6, 7).

Me-shul'lam. A Levite who returned from the captivity.

Mi'chah. One of the minor prophets. He foretold the destruction of Samaria and Jerusalem.

Mi'sha-el. One of Daniel's companions (Dan. 1: 6).

Mith're-dath. Cyrus' treasurer (Ezra 1: 8).

Mo-ras'thite. An inhabitant of Moresheth (Mic. 1: 1).

Mor-de-ca'i. A Jewish captive in Shushan, uncle of Queen Esther and deliverer of the Jews from Haman's plot.

Mo'ses. The great leader and lawgiver of the Hebrews. He was born about B. C. 1571 and died at the age of one hundred twenty years.

Na'a-man. The general of Ben-hadad II, king of Damascus Syria. He was a leper, but was miraculously cured, on washing in Jordan seven times, according to the direction of Elisha.

Na'both. A resident of Jezreel whom Jezebel caused to be slain that Ahab might have his vineyard.

Naph'ta-li. The name of one of Jacob's sons. The allotment to the tribe of Naphtali lay in northern Canaan.

Ne'bat. The father of Jeroboam.

Neb-u-chad-nez'zar. The son and successor of Nabopolassar, who was the first to reign over Chaldea after the downfall of Assyria. Nebuchadnezzar is another form of the name.

Neb-u'zar-ad'an. Chief of Nebuchadnezzar's body-guard (Jer. 39: 9).

Ne-hem-i'ah. He was one of the most prominent men among the Jews in the restoration of the nation after the captivity. Through his zeal and labors the walls of Jerusalem were restored.

Ner'gal-sha-re'zer. A prince of Babylon who released Jeremiah (Jer. 39: 3, 13).

Ne-r'iah. The father of Baruch (Jer. 32: 12).

Nim'shi. The father of Jehu, king of Israel (1 Kings 19: 16).

Nin'e-veh. The capital of Assyria on the Tigris River. It was a city of great size and vast wealth. Jonah preached there and the people repented. The city was destroyed by the Medes and Babylonians about B. C. 606.

O-ba-di'ah, servant of Jehovah. The chief officer of Ahab's household.

O'ded. The father of Azariah, the prophet who encouraged Asa (2 Chron. 15: 1).

Om'ri. The founder of the third dynasty of Israel. He was elected king of Israel by the army.

O'no. The plain in the tribe of Benjamin to which Sanballat invited Nehemiah for a conference.

Pers'ia. The great empire which reached its height under Cyrus, B. C. 486, and included all Western Asia and parts of Europe and Africa.

Pers'ian. An inhabitant of Persia.

Pe'ter. One of the twelve apostles. He was early at the tomb of our Lord on the morning of the resurrection.

Phar'ao'h. The general name of the kings of Egypt.

Phar'par. A river of Damascene Syria, supposed to be the present Awaj.

Phil'is-tines. The inhabitants of Philistia, a country lying southwest of Palestine.

Rab'-mag. A high officer in Babylon, the chief of the magi (Jer. 39: 3, 13).

Rab'-sa-ris. The chief of the eunuchs. Not a proper noun (Jer. 39: 3, 13).

Re-ho-bo'am. The son and successor of Solomon. At his succession the ten tribes revolted and formed the kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam I. Rehoboam was headstrong, vain and weak.

Rib'lah. An ancient city on the northeast frontier of Canaan.

Sa-mar'i-a. A city about thirty miles north of Jerusalem, built on a beautiful eminence rising 1542 feet above the sea level. It was founded by Omri.

Sam'gar-ne'bo. A general of Nebuchadnezzar at the taking of Jerusalem (Jer. 39: 3).

San-bal'lat. A Persian officer in Samaria who strongly opposed Nehemiah in his work of restoring the walls of Jerusalem.

Sar'se-chim. A prince of Babylon at the capture of Jerusalem (Jer. 39: 3).

Se'lah. A term occurring frequently in the book of Psalms. Its meaning is unknown. It is probably used to give some direction as to the singing of the passage after which it occurs.

Sen-nach'er-ib. At the death of Sargon, Sennacherib became king of Assyria. Sennacherib marched from Nineveh, his capital, with an immense army, and nothing could stand before the Assyrian host. Death and desolation were left behind them. His army was destroyed in the time of Hezekiah, just as he was about to take Jerusalem.

Se-rai'ah. One of the officers who arrested Jeremiah (Jer. 36: 26).

Sha'drach. The Chaldean name given to Hananiah (Dan. 1: 7).

Shal-man-e'ser. An Assyrian king who conquered Hoshea, king of Israel, and captured Samaria, his capital.

Sha'phan. King Josiah's scribe (2 Chron. 34: 8).

Sha'phat. The father of the prophet Elisha.

She'al'ti-el. The father of Zerubbabel (Ezra 3: 2).

She'chem. A city of central Canaan, in the valley between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. The

first capital of the northern kingdom. The capital was soon changed to Tirzah.

She'ma. An assistant of Ezra (Neh. 8: 4).

She-ma'iah. A prophet in the reign of Rehoboam (1 Kings 12: 22). A name common among the Jews.

She'mer. The man from whom Omri bought the hill upon which he built Samaria.

Sher-e-bi'ah. An assistant of Ezra (Neh. 8: 7).

Shesh-baz'zar. The Persian name of Zerubbabel (Ezra 1: 8).

Shi'loh. A city in Ephraim midway between Bethel and Shechem.

Shi'o-nite. An inhabitant of Shiloh.

Shu'nem. A city in the territory allotted to Issachar. It is now represented by the village of Sulem. Here lived the woman who entertained Elisha and whose son the prophet restored to life.

Shu'shan. The Greek Susa, ancient capital of Elam, a province in Mesopotamia. A seat of wealth and power after the Persian conquest of Babylon. The events of Esther's history occurred there. It was also the place of Daniel's visions.

Sim'e-on. One of the sons of Jacob. The allotment to the tribe of Simeon lay in the south of Canaan.

Si'mon. One of the names applied to Peter.

Sod'om. A city of the plain destroyed because of the wickedness of its inhabitants.

Sol'o-mon. The third king of united Israel, the builder of the first temple.

Syr'i-a. A large district of Asia, lying in the widest acceptance of the name, between the Mediterranean, Mount Taurus and the Tigris.

Tar'shish. The place, whose location is unknown, to which Jonah attempted to flee when directed to preach to the Ninevites.

Tel-a'bib. A city in Chaldea where captive Jews resided (Ezek. 3: 15).

Tir'sha-tha. The title of the governors of Judah under Persian rule (Neh. 8: 9).

Tir'zah. The capital of Israel from Jeroboam to Omri who moved the seat of government to Samaria.

Tish'bite. Elijah is called "the Tishbite." The place from which the name is taken is supposed to be Tishbe in Naphtali.

To-bi'ah. The children of Tobiah returned from the captivity (Ezra 2: 60).

U-ri'ah. An assistant of Ezra (Neh. 8: 4).

Uz-zi'ah. See Azariah.

Zar'e-phath. A Phœnician seaport. Called by the Greeks Sarepta. Elijah lived here during the famine.

Ze-bu'lun. One of the sons of Jacob. The allotment to the tribe of Zebulun was in the northern part of Canaan including most of the plain of Esdraelon.

Zech-a-ri'ah. An assistant of Ezra (Neh. 8: 4). A common name among the Jews.

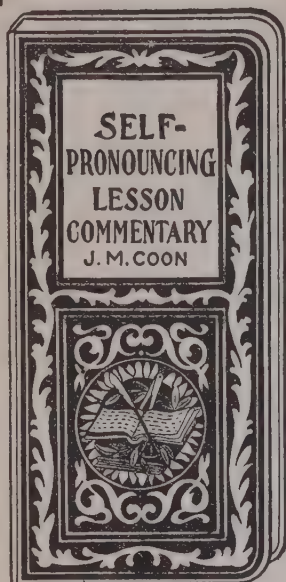
Zed-e-ki'ah, righteousness of Jehovah. Nineteenth and last king of Judah, son of Josiah and Hamutal and uncle to Jeconiah, his predecessor.

Ze-rub'ba-bel. Son of Shealtiel and a member of the royal family of David. Hence he was an ancestor of both Joseph and Mary, the parents of Jesus. His Chaldean name was Sheshbazzar, prince of Judah.

Zi'don. An ancient and wealthy city of Phœnicia on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, sometimes called Sidon.

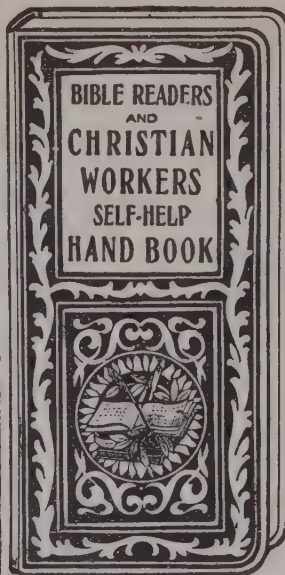
Zi-do'ni-ans. Inhabitants of Zidon.

Zi'on. The name anciently applied to the celebrated mount in Jerusalem. It later came to designate the city of Jerusalem.



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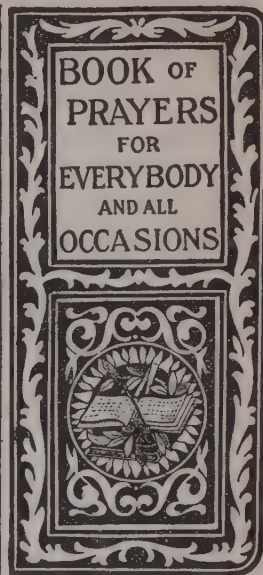
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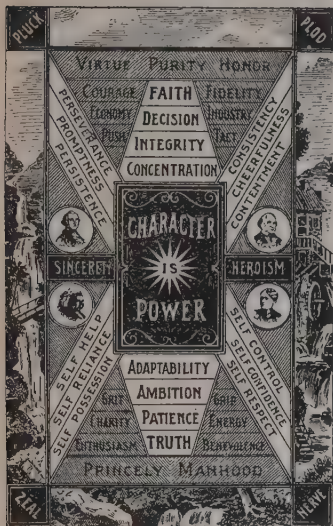
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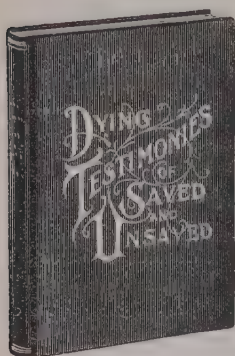


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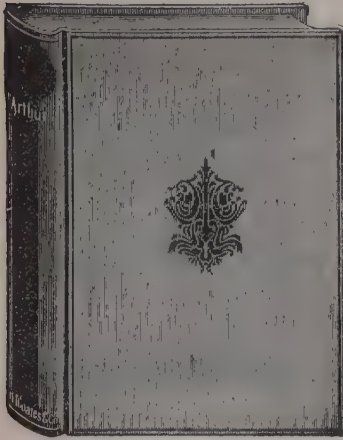
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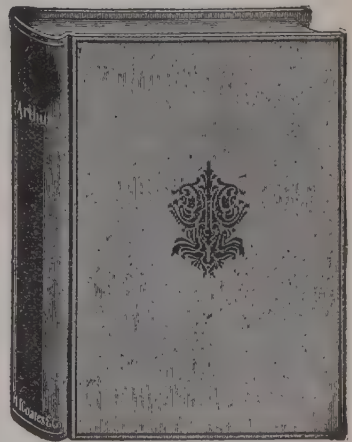
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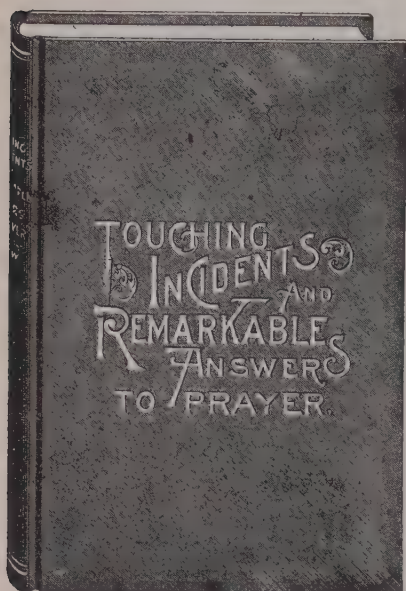
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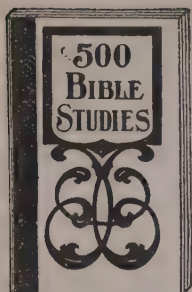
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